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# C. NATURAL RIGHTS:

A PAMPHLET FOR THE PEOPLE.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN

BELFAST, IRELAND, 1835.

*Mr. A. Perry*

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WILLIAMSBURG, L. I.:

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## PREFACE.

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The following Pamphlet was written and published by me about seven years ago—before I had, yet, thrown myself upon the turbid current of public life.

The views it contains were drawn from the fount of Nature—and it gives me pride, even at this distant period, that neither the “loyal” doctrines of the Orangemen---nor the sham-patriotism of the “liberals” have polluted a single line of this humble production. It begins by exhibiting the true merits of the British Government---and it proceeds to show the actual position of political affairs in the British Islands.

This was, indeed, necessary, because at the time I speak of the mass of the Irish people knew almost nothing of the system that oppressed them. Religious animosities had taken possession of the whole people. The “loyal Orangeman” was rackrented to the point of starvation yet he cried “to H—with the Pope” and toasted ‘the glorious and immortal memory’ with as much zeal as if he were not himself as abject a serf as his Catholic fellow countryman. On the other hand the Catholic would shout praise and glory to any lord or Duke—no matter how tyrannical—who called himself a ‘liberal’, and subscribed £10 towards building a Chapel out of the ten thousand which his rapacity wrung annually from the famished tillers of the soil. I therefore began with delineating the actual nature of the Government, and the actual state of parties---an arrangement that will, I think, be found useful in the present edition.

But the main object of the pamphlet is to discuss, and define the nature, and true extent, of land Ownership. This is a subject which had received no attention in the British Islands up to the publication of this Tract. The unlimited right of a few hundred individuals to appropriate the entire soil to themselves had never been disputed. Often have I heard the Farmer declare that he would not pay Tithe because he did not receive any value from the Parson, but he did not grudge to pay the landlord, because he “gave him value for his money”.

Men spoke upon the subject precisely as if “Landlords” had

created the soil—had maufact'r'd the seasons by which that soil is periodically fertilized—and then let it out at a yearly hire to the People—thus “giving them value for their money”

I was, of course imbued with the common opinion—but though I firmly believed that the landlord “had a right to his estate,” I believed as firmly that it was not the design of God to leave men so poor and helpless that they could never get above the drowning point of misery. Something was wrong somewhere; I tried to find out where the wrong lay, and the following Tract was the result of my investigations.

Since it was originally published, though brief the time, I have gleaned up some experience. I left the retirement of a remote village in Ireland, and threw myself on public life in the ‘metropolis of the world’. I did so with the single, and it may seem romantic, object of vindicating the principles contained in my little publication.

During a singularly eventful sojourn in England I lived in the conflict of opinion, and I made my living by it. From the Imperial Legislator, down to the mendicant scavenger, who sweeps a “crossing” for the privilege of asking an alms, I have conversed with them all upon my chosen topic. I have carried the same subject into all the varieties of life in the provinces. I have debated it with hundreds of men—I might perhaps say thousands---and I have never met any argument to affect the truth and justice of the principles and opinions here laid down.

With the exception of what is not a *principle* but a *means*. I allude to Moral force in effecting popular Reforms. My experience has changed the opinion expressed on that subject.—Moral power in its abstract purity will do little in forcing justice from unjust governments, like that of Great Britain. Indeed Moral Power, in any country, is nothing the worse of a little Physical force to look on and see fair play. If it were not for our own Physical Power looking on, and backing our moral right, ten to one the British Government would have mistaken New York for Canton, and given to this Republic all the attention that she is now paying the Celestial Empire.

As for the style and arrangement, there it is with all its merits and defects upon its head. Without correction or revision, just as it was written by an inexperienced hand, amid wilds a hundred miles distant from any Office that could be found to print it. It is not all my maturer judgment might desire—far from it: but, taken all in all, I am not ashamed to link my name with it at this distant day, and in this new country.

THOMAS A. DEVYR.



# OUR NATURAL RIGHTS &c.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *The British Government.*

“Whose freedom is by sufferance, and at will  
Of a superior, he is never free.”—COWPER.

The following brief Treatise is addressed chiefly to my brothers of industry and toil ; and, as I am aware that many of them do not rightly understand what sort of hotch-potch our social system is, farther than to know it bad by its effects, I shall commence by laying down an outline of its form ; and first, of the Constitution of our Government---King, House of Lords, and House of Commons.

THE KINGLY OFFICE is hereditary. The principal powers vested in the Crown are these:—Choice of the Ministry, which conducts the government—prerogative of convening, proroguing, and dissolving the House of Commons—of creating new Members of the House of Peers—and any measure, though passed by both Houses of Parliament, cannot become law without having received the Royal assent.

The House of Lords is principally composed of the hereditary nobility—the King seldom exercising the power of creating new Peers. It is the prerogative of this House to alter any measure which may have been passed by the House of Commons; (but so altered, it cannot become law, without afterwards receiving the sanction of the Commons) or to finally reject it, by which it is quashed for the Session then being, if not brought forward in an altered shape. This House makes our Constitution a negative oligarchy ; but as it opposes itself to every kind of national improvement, it is likely to be new modelled, or entirely borne down, by the reforming spirit of the age.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS is elective by registered voters—of these, nine-tenths are to be found in the middle and, what is termed, the lower classes of society ; hence, we find—as its very name implies—that this House ought to belong to the common people ; but the Aristocracy have long usurped all power and authority there.—This they formerly effected chiefly through

means of the "Rotten Boroughs;" and now, that an indignant people have prostrated those strongholds of the robber, they *quietly* effect the same purpose by the *absolute ownership of land*, which gives to the landlord the power of driving to poverty and destitution any tenant who might dare to vote contrary to his directions. Effectually is this ruffian power exerted, and it is infinitely worse in its effects than the "Rotten Borough" system—that laid no sin to the soul or the unfortunate peasant—but *this* violates his conscience, takes from him his honesty, and leaves him "poor indeed." The House of Commons is composed of 105 Irish, 53 Scotch, and 500 English Representatives, in all 658 Members. To it belongs the power of raising the taxes, and voting the amount to its several uses. In it most laws are formed, subject, as has been said, to revision or rejection by the House of Lords.

I have observed that the House of Commons, of right, belongs to the common people. If any man deny this, it is plain that that man would allow the people no power at all in the state. The King, the principal Gentleman in the realm, will, naturally be favorable to his brothers of the Aristocracy; and his power is very considerable. The House of Lords will, of course have a tender feeling for themselves, and their power is absolute, inasmuch as no law can be enacted without their sanction. And if the people have not a preponderance in the House of Commons, then, they have *no power at all* in the State, but are completely at the mercy of the gentlefolks, and *must* obey whatever laws these same gentlefolks *choose* to enact. Whether the people have, or have not, that preponderance remains to be examined.

A very brief examination will lead us to the truth of this matter. The House of Commons is divided into three parties—Tories, Whigs, and Radicals. The Tories are for continuing tithes, taxes, and every species of speculation that tends to aggrandize the rich and beggar the poor. This class holds the opinion (exemplified in the speech of Sir Robert Peel, on the vote by Ballot—June, 1835) that *one* man, possessing fifty thousand pounds is equal to *five hundred* men, who may be possessed of only one hundred pounds each. *Money*, the vile creation of man, according to the Tories, possesses all discrimination, and ought to possess supreme power in guiding the affairs of the State. And *man*, the noblest work of the Almighty, ought, according to the same authority to possess no power at all. By the way, Sir Robert Peel is one of the most moderate, as he is, unquestionably, the most talented of the Tories.

The Whigs profess to be the friends and servants of the peo-



ple—and certainly, they are better rulers than the Tories—but still they are *Aristocrats*, and as such, their feelings and interests are at variance with the rights of the *people*. We see a remarkable instance of this in their opposition, as a Government, to the “Vote by Ballot”—which by screening the people from the tyranny of their landlords, would give them the free exercise of the elective franchise. Indeed, if we take a general and dispassionate view of the conduct of the Whigs, we cannot but perceive that there is not so much difference between them and the Tories as is generally supposed to be. The Tories bestowed useless places, and unmerited pensions, on their friends, at the cost of the public. The Whigs *refuse* to do the people justice by abolishing those places and pensions. Instead of collecting forty eight, millions, sterling, annually, off the people as would the Tories, the Whigs, by great economy, might contrive to do with forty-seven and a half millions. The Tories would have withheld Catholic Emancipation. The Whigs strained every nerve to achieve that measure of justice; but *mark*, they were not *losing* by the change, but, on the contrary, *strengthening their party in the State*. The Tories would allow the people no power at all in the House of Commons—the Whigs would allow them a small modicum of power, important only when assisting themselves to beat their old foes, the Tories—but totally incapable of effecting any good against the wishes of the master Whigs. If any man think the Whigs the staunch friends of the people, that they would fain be considered, let him scrutinize their *conduct*, and then hold his opinion if he can.

The Radicals, the third party in the State, are chiefly delegated by the people; but so few are they, in comparison to the Whigs or Tories, that they rarely venture to push any question that is not approved of by the master Whigs; indeed, their doing so serves no purpose, save to show their own weakness, and the strength of the Aristocracy. Perhaps the number of *out-and-out* Radicals that represent the People in the House of Commons is not above fifty or sixty—certainly, not one hundred—hence, it is evident, that the people have no effectual check over their own House, and, consequently, are the slaves of a plundering and vile Oligarchy.

## CHAPTER II.

"Truths that you will not read in the Gazettes,  
But which 'tis time to teach the hireling tribe,  
That fatten on their country's gore and debts."

Byron

Having seen that the Aristocracy are possessed of all power in making the laws, we come to enquire how that power is used.

First—By it they have confirmed to themselves the *absolute ownership* of all land, and water too, as far as they can throw their chain about it; they collect the produce of the entire, leaving to the unfortunate occupier what is scarcely sufficient of coarse food and wretched raiment to keep him alive to work for the next yearly supply.

And for what purpose is this wealth collected? For what great end is the virtuous and industrious peasant banded over to degradation and distress? That the landlord may be enabled to prosecute high researches and ennobling discoveries? That he may improve science and civilize the human race? No! but that he may be enabled to fling hundreds on the harlot's lap, and thousands on the gamester's table. That he may support a troop of worthless, soulless dependents—a crowd of vagabond singers and dancers, who pander to his *idiot pleasures*, and feed on him as vermin on a putrid carcass, that this wealth may filter from him, through all the ramifications of a city, and support its *every vice and crime*. These are the vile objects, to attain which he hands the poor peasant over to rags and hunger! Whether he has a *right* to do so, shall be examined hereafter.

As the same precious brood of landlords possess (as has been seen) all power in the government of the country, it is no way strange that the same reckless and plundering spirit pervades that department. Though six millions\* a year, would (accordnig to Mr. Hume, the best authority in the empire,) support a good and efficient government, yet there are forty-eight millions, annually, collected off the people of these realms.—This is raised by a duty on almost every article in use amongst us. Were it not for the duties, we would have

Tobaco, for one half penny per ounce, or growing in our fields,

\* And this is an estimate for upholding order in our present monstrous and absurd social system. In a *rational* state of society, *one million* would be more than sufficient.

affording employment to thousands of our starving population ;  
 Tea, for a penny per ounce ; Sugar three pence a pound ;  
 Spirits and Beer, for half their present value ;  
 Window-glass, for perhaps a fourth of what it now costs ;  
 Superior Norway Timber, for a far less price than we now  
 pay for indifferent Canadian; Paper and books for one half, and  
 newspapers for one fourth of the money which they now cost us  
 Wine we could have for two or three shillings a gallon in-  
 stead of twenty shillings, as we now pay.\*

The latter article is not, I admit, essential to the comfort of the community at large, but, in the decline of life, a moderate quantity would, according to the best physicians, both prolong existence, and contribute to bestow health and cheerfulness to the last ; and yet, the policy of our rulers forbids the poor man ever to taste of it, though bending beneath age and infirmity, and tottering on the brink of the grave.

The above is barely sufficient to give an idea of our taxation, and how it deprives the vast majority of the community of many of the comforts of life, by so raising their prices as to put them beyond the reach of the people. As it is a *forced* and *unnatural* system, so it is difficult and expensive in the operation. Bear witness ye shoal of Coast-guards and Revenue cruisers, ye swarm of land officials, from the Commissioner of Stamps to the still-hunting Policeman. These all, all must be supported; consuming much and producing nothing, in order to keep the present enslaving system in operation—a system which makes property of the industry and persons of the people. If there existed no other means of supporting a Government for the regulation of society, man would certainly have a right to give up a portion of his labor for that purpose. But there *do* exist other and legitimate means—the means by which all Governments were originally supported. An inconsiderable levy off the land which God has bestowed on us, would support a vigilant and efficient Government. And as the proprietors, or, rather, chiefs (for I deny that they are, or can be, proprietors) of estates, would be the taxpayers, the collection would be cheap and simple.

Let us now take a view of the uses to which this yearly forty-eight millions are applied. In the first place, about twenty-eight millions sterling go to pay the interest of what is denominated the “National Debt.” This debt, amounting to the astounding sum of nine hundred millions, sterling, was contrac-

\* Sterling.

ted by our Government, at different periods, during the last 150 years, for the purposes of war! Was there an enemy landing on our shores to destroy us?—No such thing; The French people wished to have a particular form of Government—our Lords and Gentlemen would not allow them to enjoy that particular form; so they purchased hundreds of thousands of fellow-beings, and sent them over to France to butcher and be butchered.\* Our Lords and Gentlemen likewise hired all the foreign troops they could procure to help to butcher the French. To do all this they required money, so they borrowed of such as had it to lend; and for every £50 or £60 which they borrowed, they, by a species of *forgery*, gave the promissory note of the people for £100, without the consent, or even the knowledge, of the great body of the people. Hitherto, they have compelled us to make good this *forged* compact—whether they have a right to do so, common sense will decide—but this I will venture to say, that if we had money for throwing away, we would not apply a single penny of it to such purposes of unnecessary war and fiendish slaughter. Look at the first American War. In a consultation of our Lords and Gentlemen, they determined to charge the Americans a certain sum for the privilege for drinking tea. The Americans thought themselves at liberty to drink tea when they pleased, without paying our Lords and Gentlemen for their permission; whereupon our Lords and Gentlemen wax very wroth, and send thousands of British soldiers over with a commission to slay the Americans. (And here I must remark for the edification of my simple readers, that it is no sin to butcher any number of our fellow beings provided our lords and gents give you permission to do so,) But the brave Americans grappled with them on the shore, and sustained the death-struggle with invincible resolution and vigor, until the hireling phalanx, exhausted sunk before the virtuous and firm ranks of independence.—This was the first ray of freedom that shot across our political horizon for ages. The dark tempests of ambition, and the meteor-lights of glory, had long involved and bewildered degenerate man, and led him back almost to barbarism, until this beam of the West arose to guide him on the way to truth and happiness. And from whom did it emanate? From the learned divine, or the profound philosopher? No—but from

\* This war lasted, with little intermission, for twenty-two years—cost England seven hundred and fifty millions, sterling—and sacrificed two millions of human beings, of the very flower of Europe.



*the nature-taught peasant of Ireland and the North of Scotland.\**

In this unnatural struggle, many a father met the death-blow from the hand of his son—many a brother seared his soul with the crime of Cain. A work of this kind should not be taken up with any detail of this scene of blood—but I cannot forbear pausing to sigh over the fate of that youthful and gallant band—the Maryland regiment (composed of the finest young men in that province—self-devoted volunteers,) who were almost to a man cut off, in opposing the last landing of the British troops, near New York.† I repeat, therefore, that if the Christian people of these countries had gold for throwing into the ocean, and human blood as cheap and plentiful as the mountain stream, they would spill neither the one nor the other on such unjustifiable slaughter. And that same people, apathetic or misled though they may now be on the subject, will yet rouse themselves and judge whether they have a right to pay what *others* borrowed for such unchristian and inhuman purposes.—But it may be said, that every penny of this debt was borrowed by consent of Parliament, and that the people consented to it through their Representatives. Let me ask—*Who* had the Representatives?—The people had none. *They* have very few even yet. But this profligate debt was contracted under the “Rotten Borough” system, when the House of Commons was entirely composed of the Nobility and their nominees. It is, therefore indisputably a debt of the aristocracy; and I think it will puzzle them and all their hireling writers to prove that the people have a right to pay it. But it is nonsense to talk of payment, as it has been computed, that all the merchandize, chattels, gold, silver, and every inch of land in the empire, would not be sufficient to pay off this monstrous debt. If the people fairly and honestly owed the money, they would have to do what a private individual would

\* A. D. 1773.—About this time, the common people of Ireland and the North of Scotland were so cruelly harassed by their unfeeling landlords, who raised the rent of their land upon them, without considering whether they could pay it, that they emigrated to America in great numbers; and of these, it is said, was principally composed that army which first began the war in that part of the world conducted it with such spirit and perseverance, and did not conclude it, until they had rendered themselves and their new adopted country independent of their old masters. Oppressed subjects, when driven to extremity, become the most dangerous foes—they are actuated by a spirit of revenge against their tyrants, which cannot be supposed to influence the natives of a foreign country.—*Goldsmith's England.—School Edition.* [Truly here is a lesson for our absolute landlords.]

† During this war 200,000 men were slain.

do in the like circumstances, namely—turn bankrupt, and settle it in that way. But, if the people *did not contract*, and, consequently, *do not owe* a penny of it, the case is altered completely, and the path they have to pursue is plain and obvious.

It is all nonsense to talk of the inviolability of the national faith, and the ruin a breach of it would bring on thousands who have vested their fortunes in the government debt. To such *cant*, I reply, that the *national faith cannot be broken, as it never was pledged*; and, in common dealing, if any man purchase a bad article, he must bear the loss it brings; or, if a forged bank note be foisted on him, can he compel the bank to give him payment of it? I think it is both law and common sense, that he must pocket the loss, or follow the forger.

But it will be by no means so bad with the fund-holders—agitation of the question will, like the rumor of war, tend to lower the price of stock, by slow degrees; and, when it is reduced to a certain level, a reformed Legislature may, in some sort, indemnify the then holders, by a mulct on our Dukes and Lords, regulated in proportion to the number of votes exercised by each, in contracting this infamous debt. In the interim, any individual fund-holder, who so wishes, may get rid of the falling concern, at an inconsiderable loss, and those who bat-like cling to the rotten fabric, will richly deserve to get a shock in its ruin.

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### CHAPTER III.

'Tis avarice all—ambition is no more;  
See all our nobles begging to be slaves—  
See all our fools aspiring to be knaves.—POPE.

Let us now examine what sort of value we receive for the remaining *twenty millions, sterling*, which are collected off us, annually. I have already glanced at the “*swarms*” and the “*shoals*” that are employed in guarding and collecting the duties. The expense of supporting these is enormous. A large sum is next required for the support of an army and navy. These, in the present state of society, when a thirst of slaughter and plunder—to which we contribute our full share—is a *glorious* vice, may be indispensable to our existence and safety as a nation; but, let good and rational governments once become general, and an army and navy would not be worth two and sixpence a year to this or any other state, as the unchristian and inhuman trade of war would sink into total dis-



use, and its name only go down to posterity, steeped in the contempt and disgust of all succeeding ages.

Another very large sum goes to support the government offices: there are the Premiership, the Chancellorship, the Secretaryships, and a score or two of other offices, which cost the country from five to twenty thousand a year each. With all due respect for the abilities and integrity which the Right Honorables bring into these offices, I may venture to remark, that these same commodities cost the country a little too dear. The whole wealth of Cincinnatus was a farm of seven acres, which he tilled with his own hands; yet at three different periods, he held the office of Dictator to the Roman Commonwealth,—an office of absolute and unlimited power over all law.—Having, by his wisdom and virtue, saved his country from impending ruin, he laid down his authority, and retired to his little farm, without any reward, save the approval of his own heart, and the blessings of his country. Lord Byron, in addressing Wellington, has said—

The high Roman fashion, too, of Cincinnatus,  
With modern history has small connexion.

It has indeed small connexion with the history of such moderns as Wellington, and his Whig and Tory *caste*; but man is endowed with the same inherent nature now, that he possessed in those early and virtuous times; and shall we allow those to trample over us who continue, by their influence and example, to degrade and pervert that noble nature.

There are also innumerable offices under government, at salaries of £500 to £5,000 a year. Many of these are sinecures,—that is to say, there is no duty to be performed in them; and the persons filling these offices receive their salaries for doing nothing. There are other offices which require the performance of service. These, you may think, are conducted on straightforward and honest principles. No such thing. Lords, or the relatives, or hangers-on of lords, hold these offices, at £500 to £5,000 a-year, clap in deputies at £100 to £500, to do the duty, and *honorably* pocket the remainder. Can there be more downright robbery than this? Yes: the openest, the most barefaced robbery remains to be mentioned in the state pensions. You, my friends, do not, perhaps know what state pensioners are. I'll tell you—they are precious gentlemen and ladies too, on whom our rulers have thought proper to bestow yearly incomes, out of the public purse.—These folks have nothing to do but order their servants, call their coaches, wear silks and jewels, eat the choicest delicacies,

and get drunk with select wines—every quarter-day brings a sheaf of bank notes, wrung out of the hard earnings of the people, to support their idleness and luxury. Is not this shameful?—Is it not sinful? Can the people who *must* labor for the support of these idle vagabonds call themselves free?—No, no: the placemen, the pensioners, and the holders of the government debt, have dared to assume an actual property in our persons, and if permitted, their worthless effeminate descendants will assume the same property in our unborn offspring. Away, then, with the name of freedom!—To us it is all a delusion—we are *slaves*, and let us not, by assuming the name of freemen, stamp ourselves idiots, too.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Who can tread the memorable fields  
Where freedom's battle has been lost or won  
Nor feel thy mighty spirit, Independence,  
Great in his bosom.—HETHERINGTON.

Having given a slight outline of the principles of our government, I proceed to take a retrospective view of the events which led to the present state of affairs in these countries, examine the great political questions of the day, and discuss how far they will or can remove the evils of society.

The people of these realms seem to have evinced no rational idea of freedom previous to the year 1782; and probably the American struggle served to give them a knowledge of its nature and importance. Before that period their disputes were principally caused by the restless ambition of their chiefs, or tended merely to a change of masters; but, at that memorable era the Irish Volunteers took up arms to protect their country from foreign invasion. These gallant bands soon turned their attention to the deplorable state of slavery to which that country was reduced by the despotism of England. At this time, and up to the Legislative Union, in 1800, the nobility of Ireland were not the unfeeling aliens which they have since become; they *then* had a country, and their pride was hurt at her humiliation;—nay, more, they lived among their people, and had not learned to entirely disregard the voice of nature and humanity; but the Union

“Has made them what we well may hate.”

At this period (1782) there was a Parliament in Dublin,

or rather the mockery of a Parliament, as it might spend six weeks in framing a law, and after the whole trouble, an English Secretary could, with one dash of his pen, make a jest of the whole affair. The Volunteers, brandishing their drawn swords, protested against this monstrous and contemptuous stretch of power, and they succeeded in putting it down. Other grievances, in which their leaders partook, were fearlessly denounced by the Volunteers, and immediately redressed by Government; but the principal grievances, and in which their leaders (men of property) did not partake, namely rents, tithes, and their attendant evils, were kept smouldering in the public mind, until they broke into open flame, in the rebellion of 1798.

That the ultimate intentions of the United Irishmen were to shake off English connexion, and establish a Republic, as in America, admits of no doubt; but rents and tithes were the original causes of their combination; indeed, one of their mottos was, "*Half rent and no tithe.*" The result of that struggle is fresh in the memory of Irishmen, in which one hundred thousand of their brothers fell; of these not a third perished in the field—the platoon fire, the halter, and the torture did the rest. There is a sickening sympathy which we feel at beholding the violent and premature death even of a guilty person—the reflection, that he was hardened in crime, that he deliberately took the path to the scaffold, is not sufficient to reconcile us to his hapless fate. What, then must have been the feelings of the desolate mother and widowed wife at beholding their high-souled virtuous protector dragged to the dog's death—what the maddening burstings of his own brain, as manacled and helpless he stood, the scoff of his cold-blooded executioners?

With not a friend to animate and tell  
To others ears that death became him well;  
Around him foes to forge the ready lie,  
And blot life's latest scene with calumny."

But this bloody leaf is closed for ever; the contest has been transferred from the *mortal* body to the *immortal* mind, and the fate of tyranny is sealed.

Immediately after the suppression of the rebellion, the measure of the "Legislative Union" between the two countries was effected. It is not necessary to discuss the merits or demerits of that measure, farther than to observe, (what cannot be disputed,) that it promoted Absenteeism to an extent unprecedented at any period, or in any part of the world.

The reluctant assent of the Irish Catholics to the Union was



to have been repaid by Emancipation; but Mr. Pitt, the then Premier, either would not, or could not, effect that measure, and in consequence resigned office. Then gradually arose the "Catholic Association." This body must be considered the most important that ever existed in any age or country not because it achieved Emancipation, but because it discovered the *omnipotence* of moral power---that power which can fling tyranny from its high place, while it presents nothing tangible to its deadly gripe. Look at the history of Reform in England. Before the Catholic Association grew into importance, we find the Reformers butchered in the streets of Manchester by the king's troops. Afterward, we find them constructing Political Unions, on the model of the "Catholic Association" which made even Wellington quail before them, though holding the reins of Government, and backed by all the Tory and military force in the Empire. Emancipation made Roman Catholics eligible to Parliament and other high offices but as the attainment of these is naturally restricted to the very highest and wealthiest of that profession, the middle and lower classes are "exactly where they were," save, indeed, the honest pride they must feel at being no longer a dishonored and degraded caste. Reform shut against the Aristocracy the Rotten-Borough road to power---but a road still lies open to them, through the absolute ownership of land. Look at the Corn-Laws. The manufacturing and commercial population have a certain sum to lay out in food---the landlord says "you shall not go where you please to lay out your money---you must buy from me; and I will charge you only double what you would pay elsewhere---and they must submit to this extortion. Where, then, is the freedom---the popular power, about which we hear so much fuss and noise? The creations of a fevered brain, they vanish before the first glance of returning reason.

Another act of our Whig and Tory Aristocrats was the voting of twenty millions, sterling, to the kidnappers of the West Indies---a horde of anti-Christian inhuman planters---seize the poor negro on his native fields---compel him to work by the cruellest torture, and deprive him and his children of their liberty for ever. If a thief steal your horse, and is detected, not only what he has stolen is taken from him but the law punishes his crime with transportation or death. But the thief planters are detected, and what is the punishment awarded them by our Whig justices? Why, twenty millions sterling out of the pockets of the British people.

## CHAPTER V.

It's hardly in a body's power  
 To keep at times from being sour,  
 To see how things are shared.—BURNS.

I now come to examine the great political questions of the day, and discuss how far they can remove the evils of society.

The most important questions which at present occupy the public mind are the "Vote by Ballot"---"Corporation Reform"—and the tough and-bloody "Tithe Question." The "Vote by Ballot," by far the most important of these, has been opposed and defeated by Whig and Tory combined. A stinted reform of the English Corporations has been wrung from the reluctant Lords; and a breaking-up of the Irish Boroughs is likely to be effected. This will, to a certain extent, be an undoubted benefit; but the "Tithe Question"—I really cannot perceive how that can be settled to the advantage of the poor farmer, while the landlord retains *absolute ownership* of the land.

Every plan that have hitherto been proposed for settling this question were founded on the principle of the Parson losing part, and receiving the remainder—partly out of the landlord's income, and partly out of the public purse; and this plausible remedy seems to have satisfied the great body of the liberals, and even Mr. O'Connell,\* who warmly recommended it. By the last Tithe Bill, (and the present, 1835, is a mere revival of the last,) the Parsons were to lose £26 15s. per cent., and to receive the remainder, £68 5s off the landlord's income, and £5 out of the public money. By these means, the farmer is greatly relieved; but when we contemplate the damning fact, that landlords have, within the last fifty years, doubled—aye, quadrupled—the rents of land, we at once perceive that, by a gradual rise in rents, they can easily transfer the burthen of the Parsons from their own gentle backs to the bleeding shoulders that have hitherto borne it—nay, the landlord would have it in his power to pocket the £26 15s., which the Parson loses, and the £5 which he receives of the public money; as the farmer, eased to that amount, would, by bringing him to the old level, be able to pay this money in the shape of additional rent. And what is to prevent this state of things

\*Vide his letter to the Irish people, placing the "Repeal of the Union" in abeyance.

from actually taking place? The conscientious forbearance of the landlord! Oh, save me from such a safeguard! Short leases will be a short protection to the farmer, and long leases are rather a scarce commodity—and as the landlord has a great aversion to lessening his income, the relief to leaseholders will, in all human probability, be added to the burthen of the *yearly tenant*, already the most oppressed member of the community. Such a letter as this, from an Absentee to his agent, would not, in these times, be very extraordinary:

*London, Sunday Morning.*

JACK, as usual, I took a peep in at the hells last night. By a cursed run of ill-luck I lost £700, to Rifle, the celebrated French gamester---this put me so devilishly out at elbows, that I had to borrow a fifty for a freak with a fine Opera girl. My Irish estate was worth ten thousand a-year before this d---d Tithe Bill, which has reduced it to nine thousand. But as I cannot afford to feed the black cormorants, you will have to *raise the rents, and send me the original sum*. I am sorry that we cannot touch the leaseholders for the present, but when the leases drop we will have fair play at them---*meanwhile my yearly tenants must make up the deficiency*. Your's, &c.

SQUANDER.

As it may be supposed that good or ordinary landlords will do nothing like this, I shall relate a *fact* that lately fell under my observation, and which bears directly on the point. A Scotch gentleman, who possesses considerable property in Donegal, and who enjoys, and, comparatively speaking deserves the name of a good landlord, paid a visit to his property in the Autumn of '34. In an arrangement with his tenantry, he took upon himself the payment of all Tithe on his estate, *but so raised the rents as to leave a nett profit in his hands after paying the Parsons*. This, it is evident, left the tenant as ill or worse off than before.

But it will be said that this is an evil which cannot be got rid of—that the “land is the property of the landlord,” and as such he can do with it what he pleases. If this doctrine be true, farewell to all hope of raising the people to freedom and happiness. Talk not to me of relief from the burthen of Tithes or Taxes, while the landlords have power to lay on as much additional weight as we can bear. The money which we would save by a reduction of Church-livings, Taxes, &c., would certainly make us *richer*; but as this very money now

\*The appropriate name of the noble gaming houses in London.



goes to the Aristocracy in the shape of places, and Pensions,, the change would make them proportionably *poorer*—so that this change would at once create an ability on the part of the people to pay advanced sums for the rents, & produce of land, and a necessity or excuse on the part of the landlords, for exacting them—this would be quickly done and the people would be reduced to the old level of rags and hunger.

## CHAPTER VI.

“Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone  
To reverence what is ancient and can plead  
A course of long observance for its use,  
That even servitude, the worst of ills.  
Because transmitted down from sire to son,  
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.”—COWPER.

Thus it is plain that if landlords possess absolute ownership of the land, the people never can become really independent. Either the landlords have a right to absolute ownership, or the people have a right to independence. One of these two rights must destroy the other—both cannot exist at once. This forces us on the question—“Does this unlimited ownership *rightfully* belong to the landlords?” This is a question of awful importance—on it rests the freedom, the happiness of the human race. The landlord answers—“I purchased it with my money, or my ancestor bequeathed it to me as an inheritance.” To this I reply, you could not purchase what no man had a *right* to sell—nor could your ancestor bequeath to you what did not, and *could not*, belong to himself—namely, unlimited ownership of the soil.

Before we investigate the *right* of absolute ownership, let us examine how it actually works—for the good or for the evil of society. Alas, we need not stop long on this inquiry. The splendour of dress and equipage, the thousand luxuries, the ease and sloth, which this power basely keeps to itself, and the shapeless dirty rags, the miserable shelter, the continuous toil, & the wretched food which it ruffianously assigns to its victims\*,

\* In travelling over a mountainous district of Donegall, some years since, I observed a number of men at work, repairing the highway. They were carrying gravel on their backs, across a moor, in which they sunk almost to the knee at every step. Never before had I seen human beings subjected to such brute excessive labour. On inquiry I found they were em-

show in a moment its villainous effects on society. Instead of landlords being the promoters of improvement and civilization, which, under just and proper restrictions, they would be, they are an effectual drag-chain upon agriculture, and, consequently, on every other kind of improvement. Instead of being the regulators, they are now, in fact, the derangers and disturbers of society. As

“Facts are chieils that winna ding  
And downa be disputed.”

I shall here mention one out of thousands such that came under my own observation. Not long since, purchasing hay of a small farmer, and observing that his little meadow had produced a very bad and scanty crop, I was not a little severe on him for his idolence, particularly as I saw his farm afforded many facilities of fertilizing the spot. “I have no lease,” replied the poor man, “and why should I labour to improve, when I know that *my rent would be raised* to the full value of my improvements.

This is the true secret of our want and misery---this the great blight which, hanging over the land, keeps in a state of nature our reclaimable wastes\*, and blasts with comparative sterility our most fertile vales. Every shilling of capital, and every day of toil that the occupier may expend on improvement, is forfeited to the landlord; and, should his condition approximate to decency, instead of the voice of approval or encouragement, he hears the agent growl forth, “that fellow can live as well as myself.” There is, then, a valuation held, and a few pounds added to his rent reels him back to the level of wretchedness!

ployed by their landlord, (a resident gentleman, of considerable property) that if they refused to engage in the work, he would thrust them out of their miserable homes; and, Hear it England! Hear it the world! that he allowed them for this labour four-pence a day!

\*On our extensive moors, beside the hut of the cow-herd, I have frequently intertwined the luxuriant corn stalk with the heath-shrub that grew beside it, without even a fence dividing them. These cultivated patches were too small to tempt the voracity of the landlord—or flourishing in the far waste they probably escaped his cognizance. The grain might be worth six or eight pounds an acre, whilst the immeasurable waste lying around, though easily susceptible of the same improvement, was not worth, in proportion, as many pence—and yet economists, by a strange infatuation, continue to insist that we require the assistance of English capital. Ireland has inexhaustible capital running to waste in her teeming soil, and the vigorous industry of her sons and daughters.

Our men eagerly seek the most toilsome work at the remuneration of 6d. to 8d. per day.—Our women are still more industrious; if the price of linen yarn afford them anything above a penny for spinning a *hank*, (3240 yards,) an *excessively* laborious days work, the market is overstocked with that article. What a change would these energies produce if properly called forth and directed.

And is this the tenure by which land must be held?---this the feeling under which it is to be cultivated?---and must barrenness and desolation spread over God's earth, and discontent and misery dwell with his people, that the landlord may indulge in his lust of power, and wallow in degrading luxury? The advocate of absolute ownership damns his name and authority, by stamping them on the vile and disgusting picture.

How different--how beautiful would be the natural state of things: The occupying peasant secure of his little farm forever at a trifling rent then, indeed, might be improved, certain that he and his children would enjoy the benefit of his industry--then would he (undrained by heartless extortion) be enabled to render his field fruitful, and his cottage comfortable. What a change, to behold the landlord residing among his happy people, receiving from them just a sufficiency for his reasonable wants, comprising the real elegancies of life; and in return, stimulating their industry by his advice and encouragement, and civilising and *refining* them by his intercourse. What a change for the landlord himself, from a life of worthless indolence and criminal excess, to one of useful, virtuous activity. It would, indeed, raise him from being the curse of society to be its blessing. This beautiful and happy system would be rendered complete by prohibiting the holding of more than a limited quantity of land by any individual farmer, and forbidding the letting of any land at a higher than the landlord's rent. Should other regulating details be necessary to its perfection, they would naturally suggest themselves in the working of the system.

But it may be thought that this would be merely a partial benefit to society, affecting only the occupiers of land. Now, it is quite evident that the industrious man who holds no land would come in for a full share of the benefit. In such a salutary state of society as this would naturally induce, and of which we at present can form no exact idea, he would find ample employment and liberal remuneration for his industry whether laborious, mechanical, or commercial\*. He would

\* An inevitable consequence of this happy change would be an improvement in the clothing, food, and other domestic comforts of the people.—Suppose every individual in Ireland could afford to expend two additional pounds annually on these necessities, this, by adding fifteen millions to our home consumption, would raise a very unusual stir among our tradesmen and shopkeepers; and further, country people, comfortable and happy at home, would not be so ready as they now are to rush into towns and starve the trade of shopkeepers and mechanics.



be enabled to realize capital, with which he could easily (if he pleased) purchase a piece of land, where every farm would be a freehold. I shall hereafter show (if it be not, indeed, self-evident,) that the change could be effected without the least confusion or evil of any kind—that it would be subversive only of luxury and sloth, and productive of refinement, virtue, and happiness. I shall now proceed to show that the landlords have *no right* to withhold their co-operation from the good work; and in doing so, I shall not at all refer to Christian morality, in support of my view of this question. The votarist of that beautiful law is commanded to part with what really does belong to him, for the general good and the landlords would, I doubt, scoff at such doctrine; but if I can prove that these same landlords have long kept what does not at all belong to them, the common laws of society will compel them to give it up.

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## CHAPTER VII.

Nature affords at least a glimmering light;  
The lines, though touch'd but faintly, are drawn right. POPE

### IS THE PRESENT ABSOLUTE OWNERSHIP OF THE SOIL FOUNDED IN RIGHT AND JUSTICE?

To reduce this question to its most tangible shape, let us take the very best title to land that is to be found in these kingdoms, and see how far it entitles a landlord to the unlimited power which he now exercises over the land.

Now, the best title that can possible exist, must be that which was handed down from the patriarchal and feudal times, and confirmed to its possessors by the different dynasties that held sway since those ancient times. If there be any title more perfect than another, it is this; and if it be rationally proved that even this title is subject to restrictions and limitations, it follows that every other title is subject to *at least* the same limitations and restraints. In order to come at the real nature and extent of this title, we must commence our examination at its first rise in the patriarchal and feudal times, and if it appear that the ownership of land was not *then* absolute and unlimited we must inquire *when* and *how* it became so. The first ownership of land was that of the patriarch who settled with his family on a certain extent of unoccupied soil. From the moment of his occupation he naturally acquired a property in the land and if another settler afterwards came to the same

spot he at once acknowledged the right of the first occupier, and withdrew to an unoccupied place—but mark, if the first settler should claim ownership of what he had not in occupation, the incomer would very naturally, refuse to recognize any such claim. These were the circumstances under which the first ownership of land was asserted and recognized, and *occupation* alone gave that ownership. In the lapse of time, the family of the patriarch became numerous; his children and grand-children grew up around him, and every branch of the family had the grazing of its flock and herd on the common territory—the unnatural thought of giving the entire property to his eldest son, never entered the head of the good old man. Indeed, any attempt of the kind would only have produced anarchy and ruin in the little commonwealth; as nature would impel every member of the community to rise up against the unjust and unnatural decree.

Well, then, we see the little state increasing in numbers and importance, their jealousies and disputes (if such they had) referred to their Paternal Magistrate—we see the person of their common father revered, and his word law—we see him “gathered to his fathers,” and his eldest son, their second father, and, of course, the most experienced man in the community, called on to act in the magisterial capacity of his father, still having the go of his flocks on the common property, & nothing more save the honour and respect due to his station.

In process of time the family becoming more and more numerous, forms a tribe or clan, of which this magistrate, or his successor, is the chief. The labour and attention necessary to regulate the affairs of the multiplying people, and dispense justice to all, is daily increasing, so that the chief, in attending to it, cannot pay the necessary attention to his flocks, herds, and other domestic concerns. While his time was employed in the service of the community, it became equitable and necessary that the community should support him and his family. Then it was that each member of the clan first contributed a sheep or bullock towards the support of the chief, *not as recognizing any right or property, on his part, to the soil on which their cattle pastured*, but as a just and indispensable return for his *services* in regulating the affairs of the clan. It was, in fact, *neither more nor less than wages for service done*. Let us suppose, for a moment, that the chief refused to perform his duty; that he removed himself and his family to another country, and demanded the usual supply of sheep and bullocks to be sent to him for his support;

what would be the indignant reply of the clan to the vagabond? "You sought another country—let that country support you ; for us, so far from contributing to your support, we alienate and utterly deny your blood, and you shall never more make one of our family." They would follow up this renouncement by electing a new chief, and giving to him the honor and emolument which the other profligate had abandoned.

If such was the title of the ancient chief, and if such would have been his treatment should he villainously desert his post, *let us inquire what has altered the case as regards his successor of the present day.* In this inquiry it is, above all things, necessary that we be cool and impartial. If there has arisen, or possibly could arise, any circumstance or event in the lapse of ages, that could fairly and honestly do away with the original right of the occupier, and vest an absolute and unconditional right in the chief, why, I grant that the present regulation is just and ought to be quietly submitted to. But if on a calm and rational review of the intervening time, and of every possible event that could arise in it, we find that there did not and *could not* arise any circumstance that could fairly give him the unlimited ownership which he now assumes, I say that in this case the occupiers should demand, peaceably but firmly, the restoration of the original right of which they've been unjustly deprived.

In this examination, I will not rest the claims of the successive chiefs merely on the service they may have actually performed to their people. I will also give them credit for all the good services that it was possible and even *impossible* for them to perform, and then show that all these put together could not give them a shadow of right in the soil. Suppose that a neighboring people waged an unjust and exterminating war on the clan, and that by the wisdom and valour of their chief the formidable enemy is repelled, and happiness and peace returns where nothing was anticipated but desolation and death; suppose that the famine was supplied, and the pestilence stayed by the knowledge and foresight of the chief—and surely this is driving the supposition far enough—still, all these services could not entitle him to ownership of the land. Could he seize it, in opposition to the will of the people? Such a seizure would be death-deserving robbery. Could the people themselves bestow it on him, in reward of his services? They had no authority to do so: they had themselves only a *life-interest* in it. The land was indisputable given to supply the natural wants of man ; and while men bequeath to their children the *wants* and *necessities* of nature, I deny that they have any right



to deprive the people of the *means* given by God for their supply. Is there a *slave of custom* so stultified as to deny the self-evident truth of this position? Though his prejudices set reason and common sense at defiance, let him beware how he opposes his dulness to the judgement and authority of the Most HIGH, as recorded in the wise and beautiful regulation given by God himself to Moses :

*Levitiucs, Chap. xxv. v. 23.—The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land IS MINE, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.*

24.—And in all the land of your possession, you shall grant a redemption for the land.

25.—If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.

26.—And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it.

27.—Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the surplus unto the man to whom he sold it, that he may return unto his possession.

28.—But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it, *until the year of the jubilee, and in the jubilee it shall go out and he, (the original possessor) shall return unto his possession.*

\* Though we see that the land itself was not handed over to the absolute will of man, yet as the *use* of it was given to him during his incumbency produce growing on, and minerals extracted from it during that time, became the absolute property of man. These productions, however enhanced by art or industry, continued to be absolute property ; because such art or industry was the disposable property of man—thus Houses, Cattle, Merchandize, &c.—things produced to man's industry and evanescent as himself, are absolute property; and man's claim to unlimited right in them rests on just and very *obvious* grounds. But land, both in its very nature and in relation to man's claim on it is entirely different to these, and to point out the grounds of his unlimited right in it, would be a task indeed. Unchanged and undecaying, it will put forth its freshness when his "very sepulchre is tenantless"—aye, when the dust of his latest posterity has passed from its mother earth, she will laugh at the futile claim that once held her in trammels, assert her maternal right, & pour forth plenty to her future children. Ah, Landlord! where will then be your absolute ownership? "Will your vouchers vouch you no more of your purchases and double ones, too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures"?

And where, let me seriously ask you, is your rightful claim to it now? Produced exclusively by the Almighty Power, does your *creating labour* give you a right in it? Hung upon nothing, and driven with inconceivable velocity & precision through space, does your *guiding power* give you a right in it? Depending for its fertility on the influence of globes of doubtful nature, undefined dimensions, and indeterminate distance, does your *calculating wisdom* give you a right in it? NOTHING but your *wants and nakedness appealing to its Creator* could give you a claim on it—those wants supplied, the claim is discharged, and your further title—save as being subservient to the general welfare—is mere cheat and imposture.

Here is the complete line of demarcation drawn between land property, which is subjected to regulations and restrictions, and private property, which, by the same authority, is left to the absolute will of the owner. Under this wise and salutary regulation it was impossible for any individual to acquire an estate. Its *Divine Author* saw that the acquisition of all land by a few individuals would lead to tyranny and excess on the one side, and to privation and dependence on the other—that it would lead to the very state of society in which we at present groan—and, therefore he forbade it. HE says: “*The land is mine for ye are strangers and sojourners with me;*” and the landlord blasphemously shouts that it is his, and he makes us strangers and sojourners with him. Now, if we recognize the “absolute ownership” of land, we virtually acknowledge that the landlord is the fountain of truth and justice and that, opposed to them, Reason—Nature—Nay, GOD ALMIGHTY himself—are nothing! And what authority have we for holding an opinion so monstrous, so blasphemous? The authority of custom, and of custom, too, that took its rise in the barbarous middle ages of the world, from villainous *encroachment* and the “stand and deliver” force of arm. Perish such authority!

Having digressed into an imaginary picture of great exploits and virtuous services, and shown that even these could by no means purchase ownership of the soil, I now turn to the “cold reality—to the encroachment of the Cheat, and the sword of the Bravo.

We left the patriarchal chief performing the duties, and receiving the wages of his magisterial office. So far, all was perfectly fair and just; but, as power begets ambition, and affluence generates indolence and profusion, he (or his successor) gradually increased his demand of contributions, and began to give way to negligence, and caprice, in the discharge of his duty. Any person that has observed the ideal superiority and ignorant pride, of the stripling aristocrat, will easily perceive that the son of the chief, surrounded by attendants and served with more respect than fell to the lot of his compeers, very naturally imbibed the seeds of pride and arrogance; grew up a worse man than his father, and of course made further encroachments on the rights of his people. In the lapse of ages and the absence of written documents, the original compact be-

It may be objected, that reclamation and improvement give a property in the soil. Be it so: the occupiers will then be the sole proprietors, as all improvement has been effected by them, or by the money extorted off them.

tween the people and the chief, became indistinctly remembered, or entirely forgotten. The annual sheep and bullock continued to be paid but whether for the *magisterial services* of the chief, or his supposed *right in the soil* does not appear in those dark times, to be perfectly understood or much attended to.—Then came domestic war or foreign invasion. In those commotions, some one chief, superior to the rest obtained sway, and, on the return of peace, became king. The neighboring chiefs who acted with, or were subdued by him, formed an union under him, and bound themselves to support his government with supplies and men. The new-made king, in return, confirmed to them the possession of the land on which their respective clans dwelt, and it is probable that it was at *this* juncture that the chief first claimed "*ownership*" of the soil. But whether it was at this juncture, or before it, or after it, the claim was alike unjust; his own dishonest encroachment, could not give him such ownership, neither could the king give it—in fact what was the king only a chief swelled a little bigger than his fellows—

"A pagod thing of sabre sway,  
With front of brass and feet of clay."

And I cannot see that such a "*thing*" had any right whatever to deprive the occupier of his property; and bestow it on the chief.

But however the *right* may have been, at the point preceding the introduction of government and the laws, we find the chief in possession, not only of the soil, but of the very *lives* and *limbs* of the people. The remuneration for his *services* he fraudulently and impiously perverted into a payment for *the soil and the seasons*—and the natural duty of every man to arm in defence of the community, he by the most villainous encroachment, corrupted into military service due to himself. In fact the history of the *Nobles*—ancient as well as modern—is one scene of wrongs and oppressions practised on the people, and yet man—base degenerate man!—reverences the descendents of these worthies, merely because

"—————Their blood

Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood."

But man will yet break through his mental thralldom, and such worthies will receive their due, in the contempt and scorn of a regenerated people.

Scrutinize the question, in all its bearings—turn it round and round, and examine it in every possible point of view, and we find that nothing could give *unlimited ownership of land*, except force or fraud—and the times are, I trust, fast passing away in which these could give a sufficient title.



## CHAPTER VIII.

"As to a man farming his own property, it is a heavenly life but devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat."—BURNS.—*Letter to Mrs. Dunlop.*

Before dismissing the subject another question remains to be disposed of, namely, can any peasantry be independent or happy under the system of absolute ownership.

It is useless to waste time in discussing a question the merits of which are, indeed, self-evident. Independent they cannot by any means be, even though permitted to hold their land at a shilling an acre; and the *happiness* that exists, only by the sufferance of another, is, at best of a very doubtful quality.

'Tis true, there are in Ireland some districts comparatively prosperous and independent—such are the Northern manufacturing counties. And are those districts prosperous and independent under the "absolute ownership" of the landlords. No such thing. The industry and skill of the people of these parts would be of little service to them if the landlord were not checked in his career of extortion by the deep undergrowth of the people. Our hereditary *despots* may talk as they will of the insubordination of other districts of Ireland, but in no place has their greed been effectually resisted but in the North. Who has not heard of "Tommy Downshire."\* The manner in which he enforces his right is not, perhaps, the most unexceptionable, but the *principle* he vindicates is the purest and best, and it ought to be contended for in a manner worthy itself, morally and constitutionally, like any other great political question.

If any man doubt that things are managed thus in the "North," let him take the following fact as a sample of what is doing there. A gentleman resident in the county of Donegal, some years ago, employed an *efficient* agent on an estate which he possesses near Lurgan, (County Armagh.) This hireling agreeably to his orders set about raising rents and harassing the tenantry, who, instead of patiently submitting to his "absolute" power, assembled in thousands, at noon-day, breathing discontent and vengeance. Under the influence of bodily fear, the agent requests the presence of his master to allay the dangerous discontent. When the landlord arrives on the ground, he is presented with a petition, in substance like this.—"The

\* The name assumed by the agrarian regulatars of Armagh and Down.

discontents of your tenantry do not arise from any disinclination to pay a fair and equitable rent for the land which themselves and their ancestors have occupied for centuries; they beg to refer you to the rate of rents charged on the neighboring estates and they will cheerfully pay as much as their neighbors." The landlord replied that he did not wish to be considered an oppressor, that he would reduce from 40s. to 28s. an acre, but that he would sell the estate rather than make further reduction.—These terms were agreed to. The tenantry pay 28s.; whereas, had they quietly submitted to the 40s. regimen, it is very likely that, in a country so rich and fertile, the regulation would, ere, now, be £3.

This principle is in general operation in the Northern counties. It effectually curbs absolute ownership, and so far they hold their prosperity by a *direct departure* from the settled state of things. They can now enjoy the fruits of their industry; but who would enjoy those fruits, if the landlord were permitted to fleece them as he pleased? The sturdy inhabitant of the *North* would, I doubt, in that case, be allowed the hunger and rags which now falls to the lot of his rugged brother of the *South*.

As the principle of "Tommy Downshire" is a very natural one, springing out of common sense and common justice, it is no way strange that it has manifested itself in various parts of the country, but like the good seed that "fell amongst thorns," it has been choked up by lawless combination and agrarian outrage, things which should not be tolerated, and which met with no impunity, except in the "North." The people are already aware of the vast importance of this principle; let them direct their attention to its *manifest justice*, and there is a moral power abroad that will ensure its complete and *speedy* triumph.

When we consider the diversity of the human character, it will appear strange, that, of the whole number in Great Britain there would not be found one individual landlord to do his *duty*. Laying aside all the obligations which the divine and beautiful law of Christianity lays upon us:—and oh! these should not be entirely disregarded—what an honest fame could he acquire—what a glorious name could he transmit to posterity, by giving us the first practical example of the great change which must, ere long, inevitably take place. How simple, and to a benevolent mind, how delightful the task. Imagine his tenantry convened, and the good man addressing them in language like this:

"MY FRIENDS.—It is acknowledged on all sides, that the present system of society is productive of many evils, and many are the plans and measures proposed for their removal. "Repeal

of the Union," "Abolition of Tithe," "Poor Laws," "Public Works," and so forth, are alternately in fashion. None of these can be effected without difficulty and delay, and if effected; they would, I fear, rather *alleviate* than *remove* the evils of society.

Amid all these proposed reforms and remedies, a thought has struck me, that it is in the power of every landlord to make his tenantry comfortable independent of legal enactments, and I intend to try the experiment forthwith. I will reduce my rents to a fourth of their present standard, and grant perpetual leases of all my land—to every tenant a lease of what he now occupies, except where the farm may exceed twenty acres in which case the overplus will be given to those whose holdings are least. I will reside among you, and it shall not be permitted to sell your interest in the land, save under certain restrictions: neither shall you be allowed, *in any case* to *sub let* at a dearer rent than I charge. I shall also require you to fertilize your farms and improve your dwellings, and in doing so, I shall be happy to lend you all the assistance in my power. I have employed a skilful agriculturalist, and his business shall be to give you whatever instruction you may require. Your fields must and will be fertile, and your cottages neat and comfortable.—You, my friends, may suppose that I am sacrificing my inclinations and convenience, in order to promote your good. I have no such merit—it is no sacrifice to quit the follies of fashion and sensual gratifications of luxury.

My days were lost in pursuits unworthy an intellectual and useful being, and my nights sought an escape from apathy and discontent in the whirlpool of amusing folly. I saw my wealth wasted on the worthless, the profligate, and the vile,\* and I reflected that my conduct involved a virtuous and worthy people in penury and distress. From that moment I resolved to devote my energies to other and nobler pursuits, and I am now come among my people with a fixed determination to make them happy."

What evil could possibly result from a change like this? On the contrary, what beautiful order would it not produce—what an impetus would it give to agriculture—what a vivifying spirit would it spread over the land? Fondly does the mind picture to itself the beauty, the happiness that springs forth under the regenerating system. The renovated fertility of the field,

\* It is not the landlord who enjoys, or can enjoy his income— but the cheats and hangers-on that every where surrounded him.



the waving foliage of the hedge-row, the smiling gaiety of the new-modelled cottage—its garden of vegetables, fruits, and flowers—its “bee hives hum”—its shadowing poplars—that cottage no longer the receptacle of privation and misery, but the abode of requited industry and enviable content!

And shall that picture be realized? Shall joyous independence bound over the land, bringing plenty and comfort to every fireside, or shall unnatural tyranny continue to shed its withering blight over God's creation, and dole out to dependent\* man the wretched boon of rags and hunger? OURS IS THE CHOICE! What is the power of a bloated aristocracy, when arrayed against the will of a great and intellectual people? Let the public mind but rouse itself and send forth its *written decree*, and strong though tyranny may be, entrenched in the prejudice and plunder of a thousand years, it will sink beneath that decree, and right and justice will again reign over all.

### NOTE

There is in Ireland what is termed “*duty work*.” In the mornings of Spring and Autumn, you will meet droves of the ragged, wretched peasantry, each bearing the badge of original sin on his shoulder, hurrying to the demesnes of our landlords and agents. Many of these unfortunates have to travel a journey of sixteen to eighteen Irish miles, and, of course the same distance in returning home, to perform a day's work that saves their task-masters no more than 6d. or 8d. I once had the curiosity to go to see these worse than slaves at “*duty*” on the ground of an Absentee's agent. It was in May; an immense caldron of potatoes had been boiled for their breakfast; but as the buds (germinating shoots)—some of them half-a-yard long—had been suffered to remain on them, it would take an Irishman to tell whether they were potatoes or merely a mass of concreted weeds. These, with half roasted salt herrings, (and no over supply of them,) was the breakfast; of which all partook eagerly, with the exception of one young man, who declined eating at all, and kept walking about the ground, not in the best possible humour, if I could augur aught from his knit brow and compressed lip. I could perceive that the domestic menials had better food allotted to them, and, in particular a couple of stout young fellows, whose business it was to lead on the *serfs* at the labour; and lest they might not “*lead*” well enough, there was an overseer appointed to “*drive*” them—not, indeed, with the cart-whip, but with a good *national* blackthorn.

The meal over, all were on their spades, straining and striving, and led on by the two stout domestics, the *driver* urging on the hindermost by threats and *blows*. "It's a great shame, Paddy, that you don't put the conceit out o' them fellows," said a middle-aged peasant, whose gaunt visage and bare bones sufficiently indicated why he did not engage in the contest himself. The athletic young man to whom this was addressed—and who, I perceived, had not partaken of the hogs-meal—brought all his suppressed chagrin to bear on his spade. The result was an obstinate struggle with the "leaders," whom he fairly distanced to the top of the field.

Another course was commenced but Paddy, lagged behind. For some time, the Driver did not heed him probably supposing that he would in a start take in his lost ground, but Paddy continued to move slowly and tardily, far in the rere of his fellows. This was too much, and the hoarse voice of the driver roused him from his apparent lassitude. To the exclamation of 'move on, sir, and no scheming.' Paddy replied, "I'll move as I please." To bear with this would be to forfeit his office, and, indeed the Driver seemed to be excited out of his prudence by language so new to his ear.—"Take that you scoundrel," and a swinging blow of the cudgel fell into the hand that was thrown up to receive it. "I'll take it, you dog and *give it to you*, too," said Paddy, as his iron grasp mastered the bludgeon, and, with the rapidity of a flash, bringing it to bear on the temple of the Driver left him sprawling in the furrow—then snapping the bludgeon across his knee, he shouldered his spade and quitted the field. He was servant to one of the tenants, and consequently, beyond the vengeance of agent and landlord.

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## CHAPTER, IX.

### CONCLUDING—ADDRESSED TO THE WISE AND WELL-ENOUGH.

Our needful knowledge, like our needful food,  
Unhedged lies open in the common field,  
And bids all welcome to the vital feast;  
You scorn what lies before you, in the page  
Of nature and experience, moral truth  
And dive in science for distinguished names,  
Sinking in virtue as you rise in fame;  
Your learning, like the lunar beam, affords  
Light but not heat.—YOUNG.

THOUGH the inherent principles of our nature undoubtedly lean

to virtue and philanthropy, yet man, in the present incongruous state of society, will be found much wrapped up in self, and seldom lastingly affected by the contemplation of ills that cannot reach that darling object. Hence, I anticipate the hostility of the *well-enough* portion of society to my views and opinions; but in the retreats of toiling indigence, certain wants and necessities will second my views and demonstrate the truth of my doctrines. To those whose wisdom, *and wants too*, are satisfied with the present "order" of things I leave the task of proving that Nature, in yielding the necessities of life only to the hand of industry, intended those necessities for such as perform no industry at all—that in producing the supports of life in economical and illimitably-spread quantities, Nature intended that they should be consumed in pyramidal and wasteful heaps—that in denying to every individual the *capability* of actually enjoying more than a very limited quantity of these supports, Nature intended that some individuals should collect and consume a thousand times the prescribed quantity. The wise and well-enough must prove to me the truth of these things; and further, they must convince me that the landlords have formed the mighty earth, and swung it on its eternal course; that to them we owe the vivifying smile of Spring, the creative warmth of Summer, and the serene ripening virtues of the Autumnal sky—then will I acknowledge their "absolute ownership," and agree, that to them belongs the produce of the [revolving seasons, whilst we poor devils, should thankfully content ourselves with the gleanings of the ample field.

But, if we may be permitted to divest our landlords of their divinity, and contemplate them as human and social beings, we will find that it is a withering error to suppose that they have no duty to perform—yet this seems to be an universally received opinion—as who will withhold the name of a good landlord from him who treats his tenantry with forbearance, and performs occasional acts of beneficence? But this does not, by any means, constitute a good landlord. Like every other member of society, he has a duty to perform, an important and indispensable duty, and to the non-performance of that duty society owes much of its crime, more of its ignorance, and almost the sum-total of its misery. The merchant, physician, and lawyer, the smith, shoemaker; and tailor—in fine, every class in the community have a duty to perform, and should any of these refuse to perform that duty, what a confusion would ensue? And when the most influential class refuses to perform *its* duty, and leaves man literally to run wild



without the necessary means of support, it is no way strange that the result is a derangement of social order, ignorance, and degradation, misery and crime.

There is not a worshipper of the present "order" more averse to giving an uncultivated people irresponsible power than I. I know their faults.—I have been more than once placed within a hair's-breadth of death by their ferocity, and I shudder at the idea of relaxing for a moment the iron girdle of law by which they are bound; but I would civilize them, and they would soon become another and a better, people. No longer would they regard an infraction of the law, as a deed of devoted virtue, because the law would acknowledge and protect their rights. No more would the stripling, ere yet the down is on his cheek, pant to secure "his fame" in the drunken brawl; but in the day-spring of civilization, other views would dawn on his benighted mind. And the people never can be civilized—I assert it fearlessly and emphatically—by any other than the landlord's agency. His influence pervades all, practically and minutely, and that influence *alone* can civilize and make all happy.

That human misery can be justly estimated only by those who *feel* it, may appear a strange and novel doctrine; yet experience, that "teacher of fools," has convinced me of its truth. In traversing the wilder regions of Donegal, I frequently had occasion to cross a ferry on one of the indentations of the coast. Here I witnessed the boatman's family at their meal of bog potatoes, often without a relish of *salt*—never with any thing better. I saw his children from five to ten years of age, without any covering except a piece of ragged flannel pending from the waist, and on one, a child of about three years old, I never saw a rag of clothing of any kind, though I saw it many times, both in Summer and Winter. It is now several years since I passed that way; and why is the scene of misery yet so deep in my recollection? A sympathy, not so much for the miserables as for *myself*, stamped it indelibly there. "Happening to be detained by a tempestuous water, I was necessitated to become the boatman's inmate for two days. The couch of rushes, without any covering save the hovels roof, and the scanty meal of potatoes, that smelled and tasted of [the turf on which they grew, were freely conceded to me; and *nothing better could be procured for money, though several abodes of man were scattered along the bank.* At the close of the second day, as I crossed the water and staggered to the next village, whilst my life-blood delayed in all its channels, I could then form an esti-



mate of human misery. And the poor boatman yet drags out a life of the same unvaried privation without one consolation, if he cannot derive it from the consciousness of being surrounded by thousands as wretched as himself.\*

In contemplating the providence of Nature, we perceive the most watchful beneficence joined to the profoundest wisdom; and is it not a sin of no common magnitude to counteract that beneficence—to nullify the decrees of that wisdom? In tropical climates, almost all water is impregnated with the spawn of insects, the use of which would soon prove destructive to human life. Pepper, or spices of any kind, destroy this spawn, and Nature, ever watchful and benevolent, sends them growing on almost every shrub. In the British Islands, Nature exerts the same maternal watchfulness.—If we have not spices growing on every shrub, it is because our pure waters require no antidote. Wholesome food and drink, and comfortable clothing and lodging, are what Nature requires to support us in health and vigour, and our tender parent has placed them within the easy grasp of our industry; and shall we permit a few unnatural monsters, the plague and curse of society, to wrest those *necessaries* from our grasp—to counteract the good intentions of God and Nature—and deliver us over to famine and disease?†

Oh for a spark of superhuman energy! to impress on man-

\*Glancing over a newspaper some two or three months ago, I perceived the name of our honorable and gallant representative linked to that of the river in question, (Guibara.) Of course I was on tiptoe to learn what plan he was about to adopt for the improvement of its wretched borders; but I soon found that his excursion to this wild region had a *holier* object—his was a plan for their spiritual welfare, by compelling them, at the head of a large body of military, to pay tithes into his own apostolic pocket.

† Not long since, as I loitered in the shop of a Medical gentleman in a remote village of the sea-coast, a female applied for advice in a disease of the stomach. “It is the prevalent disease of the neighborhood” said the Doctor, and I cannot be of service except you change to a better diet.” I could perceive the Irish blood rising as she retorted, “I use as good diet as any one in our parish. The Doctor prepared some medicines. “Before using these, said he, “take your breakfast of porridge and milk.—

“Oh, *Hierna!* where would I get porridge and milk! there is not a peck of oat-meal within miles of where we live. And what good diet do you live upon, asked the Doctor, “Why, potatoes and (hesitatingly) sometimes a drop of milk, like our neighbors, was the reply. After she was gone, the Doctor informed me that vast numbers in the neighborhood were laboring under similar diseases arising from the same cause. And yet I saw their scanty crop of grain being sold for export, at 6d to 7d 14lb., and as that was insufficient, their black cattle sold, some of them as cheap as eighteen shillings a head, (things, the use of which Nature absolutely required to maintain them in health) to meet the wants of the Thirty Thousand a-Year Boys.

kind the momentous truth—*That it is impossible to make a people free and happy under the system of "absolute ownership;" and that all that is bad in our institutions, and degrading in our morals would rapidly disappear under the rational system,*—THE SYSTEM OF LIMITED OWNERSHIP OF LAND.

I may be charged with an attempt to subvert "order." If so, I hurl the charge contemptuously on those who impiously counteract the beneficent designs of God and Nature. Established *abuse* I am bound to obey as long as it is established. But I am free to call the attention of the people to its injustice—to direct the electric shock of the public mind against its colossal and blood-cemented Bulwarks; and, if that people rouse themselves to a sense of their mighty wrong. I am free to give them a Second, making up in unconquerable zeal and inextinguishable hatred of tyranny, the defects of limited abilities, and an incomplete education.

I have, it is true, proposed a great and serious change; but who can prove to me that it is not as *good* as it is great, and as practicable as it is important. Many may think it too strong and sweeping a remedy for our social evils, but I call on them to point out any other remedy by which they can be radically cured. Some change of the kind must take place, or monstrous as is the system now, it will in the lapse of time, become ten times more monstrous. Why, estates in this neighborhood which some thirty or forty years ago, were not worth seven thousand pounds annually, through the fertilizing improvements of the tenant are now worth thirty thousand a-year. And though our *Honorables* will not expend a penny in enhancing the value of the soil, yet as soon as it is reclaimed, they *honorably* seize the whole benefit. The soil will go on improving, 'till in many districts it becomes ten times more valuable than it is now—this improvement will be effected, (in Ireland at least,) as it ever more has been, by the labor and capital of the tenant; and if you leave absolute ownership unchecked, the minion who *now* receives thirty thousand a-year will *then* have *three hundred thousand* extracted *fraudulently* from the toil and sweat of the people.

Nay, they have actually invented a plan for *compelling* the tenant to improve the land for them under pain of utter starvation. That hellish plan is expressed in a familiar adage, externally in the mouths of the Landlord and his subordinates, "High rent is the best manure ever land got." Now, what is the plain English of this?—Here it is: the present quality or condition of the soil does not afford us, landlords, more than a

a certain portion of produce—now we will exact double that quantity of produce, and then the tenant must reclaim the land for us or starve with his family!!

I would never close this pamphlet if I waited to embody in it a tenth of the wrongs and oppressions that crowd into my mind. The Earl of Gosford, too, "the best Landlord in Armagh," as somebody styled him—"You're a sorry set when I'm the best of you."—the Earl of Gosford could stand up at his Farming Society meeting, some four or five years ago, and make a long speech, to show that the Farmer ought to keep no horse to assist him in his labor, and concluded a *patriotic* harangue by filling the goblet high "*to spade labor, the poor man's best,*" and he, might have added, *last* "*resource* " But Lord Gosford, or any other "Gos" among them, need not "lay the unction to his soul" that such will be the poor man's last resource: They will find, to their cost, that he has other resources than stooping his shoulders to the horse's labor, and bending the image of God under a burthen of dung.

As the present wretchedness and the growing intelligence of the people, render a great and speedy change inevitable, what manner of change would be best, and what the best means of effecting it, becomes matter for the serious and instant consideration of the people. On the former question I have given my opinions at length: if the people agree with those opinions, the latter is of easy solution. An English or Irish newspaper will cost only four pence: every townland in the empire should take at least one weekly paper advocating the principles of LIMITED OWNERSHIP. This would give to such papers as would espouse the *people's cause* a circulation which would enable them to command the first-rate talent of the empire. Association on association would follow, and that *great spirit* whose waking start scared tyranny from the sin of intolerance, and the filth of Rotten Boroughs, would spring into active and vigorous life, and establish, and regulate, the long trodden-down rights of mankind.



## A WORD TO THE AMERICANS

SHOULD this Tract find its way to the Western World, I would tell its people that if they do not take means of prohibiting "Absolute Ownership" of land, their freedom and happiness—now the hope and refuge of the world—will silently and gradually sink and totally disappear beneath the conscienceless rapacity of landlords. It needs little perception to see that where an individual possesses uncontrolled ownership of any given territory of ground, he can prescribe to its inhabitants whatever *terms* his will may dictate; or should they not accede to his dictation, he can lay waste the territory. That he will prescribe *terms*, the most grinding and oppressive, and that he will use his power to the complete subversion of political freedom, we, Irishmen, have ample proof; and the Americans are not so ignorant of our concerns as not to be perfectly aware of the notorious fact, and yet they throw open their free hills and chainless rivers to the avidity of our reckless tyrants. The United States certainly contain an immense area; but let only two hundred or three hundred of our wealthiest capitalists bring their resources to bear on it for some twenty or thirty years, and I doubt not they would be able to purchase the *entire territory*. If the American people do not guard against this contingency they will repent it when too late. They may solace themselves with the thought that their land is in the possession of settlers—men that will not part with it to their old tyrants. Why, these very "*tyrants*" have already, considerable portions of it in their hands. There is Sir Edward Ellice, a member of our present Government, who has lately resigned office that he may pay a visit to his immense estates in Canada and the United States. On the whole, we may be certain that capitalists would meet with very little difficulty in purchasing, at least, half the new world, at a comparatively nominal price. But *even should* the entire country remain in the hands of the settlers, who *now* detest tyranny, because lately enfranchised from its gripe—such is the worthless selfishness of man, that these very settlers will degenerate into a vile aristocracy, and grind and trample down a future tenantry. The sole cause of American freedom is, that the energies of her people, and her political influence, is not under the dominion of landlords. So long as land can be easily purchased by the in-coming emigrant, all will go on well; but when it comes to be rented from the "*absolute owner*," farewell to the plenty and happiness, and



freedom of the NEW WORLD, and welcome the rampant tyranny—the slavery and wretchedness of the OLD.

And will the men of America—those free spirits that quitted indignantly, and forever, the lands of the tyrant—will they tamely stand to see a similar tyranny established in the land of their adoption? Or will the descendants of those heroes that fought and bled, and died, to save their country from the pollution of the oppressor, permit a domestic oligarchy to grow up and gorge upon the vitals of that country? Why, to borrow a simile from their own great land, it would be destroying a den of snakes at the peril and *loss* of life and limb; and afterwards suffering a nest of these same reptiles to breed inside of the house, and sting to death themselves and their children.—Before such a moment arrives, their Montgomerys and Washingtons will burst their cerements—again stand before the people, and once more wave the sword of chastising Justice. Let them look to this: it is of ten thousand times more importance than their railways, their steamers, and their commerce. Without the *rational and divine regulation*, the advantage of all their resources and capabilities will ultimately centre in the landlords' pocket. The principle of LIMITED OWNERSHIP, as it is the only remedy for the complicated evils of the "OLD WORLD" so is it the only preventative against the same deadly evils which are fast coming on the "NEW."

END OF THE ORIGINAL PAMPHLET.

## APPENDIX

### TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

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*Glance at the History of Land Monopoly in the British Islands. Rise and Progress of Feudal Oppression in this Republic. An Examination into the merits of the Controversy between Stephen Van Rennsellaer and the Helderberg Farmers.*

The preceding sheets contain the views and impressions produced on my mind by a contemplation of the state of Ireland in 1835. Let us now briefly examine the state of England as I left it in 1840.

Most of my readers are, doubtless, aware that *all the soil of England* at one time belonged to *all the people of England*—that each individual cultivated his own field in perfect independence—enjoying the fruits of his own labor, and surrounded by that peace and plenty which a rural life is so pre-eminently calculated to bestow. The public robbers who rose up in the land were the first to break in upon this equitable and harmonious arrangement. From mere fugitive nocturnal marauders, these robbers soon built themselves strongholds—encased their limbs in mail, and banded together in bodies laid the peaceful cultivators of the soil under contribution:—First by foraying (plundering) their fields, afterward by a yearly payment for “Protection.” This evil attained some magnitude under the Saxon dynasty; but when that National Highwayman, William of Normandy, came over and conquered the country, the right of Allodial proprietorship was wholly abrogated—and to this day there does not exist a lease or deed of property, but must contain a consideration of rent, to be given to some lordly proprietor—otherwise the deed is a nullity in the eye of the law.

About six months before I was forced to quit England I published a Tract entitled “The State of the Question.” It was a compilation from the various extant histories of England so far as these threw light on the barbarous and inhuman conduct of the Norman Barons—Their selling the tenants like herds of cattle, with the estate; the murder of those tenants by order of

the Baron, and inferior landholders; the long generations that passed over our hapless fathers, during which no ray of freedom, or of hope, broke in upon them—the successful labors of the Catholic Clergy in breaking up this hideous system of vassalage; the change in Society which followed the liberation of the Tenants, whilst the landlords still held monopoly of all the soil; the refuge provided for the destitute in the Religious establishments; the suppression of those establishments, and the confiscation of their property among the rapacious parasites of Henry VIII; the houseless destitution of the poor consequent thereon; the Sturdy Beggars—war between them and the government, during the latter part of Henry's reign and the reigns of his two successors, Edward and Mary; success of the Sturdy Beggars and their triumph over the craven aristocracy signalized by the passage of the 43d of Elizabeth; comparative comfort of the English Poor, and indeed people generally, under that famous law; commencement of the National Debt under Orange William; history of the National Debt up to the close of the French war. Doubling of that enormous debt by Peel's money bill in 1819; PROPERTY released from taxation at the close of the war—and the burthens *continued* upon LABOR; the Reform Bill, a mere widening & strengthening of the Oligarchy; the manufacturing, and commercial classes when vested with the elective franchise—their abject servility to the aristocracy and the crown, their inhumanity to the workingpeople—the unnatural doctrines of the infamous Malthus—the horrible proposal of Marcus the Child-Murderer—the Repeal of the famous Poor Law of Elizabeth, and the formal denial of man's right to be supported from the soil. All these are treated in the Tract to which I have alluded, and which was reprinted in Manchester since my departure from England, after my first edition of six thousand copies was exhausted.

In the record of history which this little work presents, one principle stands forth as the great Breakwater of Aristocracy—the irresistible crusher of man's rights. That principle, need I name it, is Monopoly of the Soil. So great was the power conferred by this monopoly that the Duke of Norfolk, by means of his estates sent seven members to the House of Commons, whilst himself, being a Catholic, could not hold a seat in Parliament at all.

This monopoly of the soil not only gave them land, waters, mines, minerals, upperwood, underwood, fish, game, and all “Royalties”—a word which comprised every thing in the “Heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under

the earth—not only did monopoly of the soil give them all this, but it gave them supreme control in the Halls of legislation, and enabled them to turn the people into one vast “gang” of Slaves, if not the most debased, certainly the most *profitable* Slaves that ever existed on the face of this whole earth

Like the children of Israel, when compelled to make bricks without any allowance of straw, the people of England are thrown upon “their own resources” to get employment where they can, to get what wages they can. This wages will average, perhaps, two dollars in the week, for full grown men.—But whatever it may average, the tyrants of the soil do not trouble themselves to inquire. All they say is “you shall not touch a human necessary until you have paid us three times the value for it” They have turned the nation into one vast huckster store, where they charge prices after the following fashion:

For two pounds of brown Sugar	37½ cents.
For half a pound of Coffee	25
For three pounds of beef or mutton	50
For ten pounds of flour	60

And For ALL OTHER NECESSARIES *in proportion*. Thus they put in motion a taxing machine, that extorts two thirds of its earnings from the famishing hands of labor. In addition to seizing upon the whole soil they will not, literally, permit the laborer to touch a morsel of food, till he has paid them two thirds of his wages for their permission to do so!

Out of this mighty extortion, is paid an Army of bayonets to coerce the people, and perpetuate the unspeakable wrong. This army is the mainspring of the machinery, and the whole cost of the extorting machine may be about ten millions sterling annually, the balance, forty two millions a year, is used up by the aristocracy, in the shape of enormous salaries, sinecure places, pensions, half pays, and an endless multitude of the most open and barefaced corruptions that ever shamed the light of Heaven. I may just mention that there are two hundred Admirals nine hundred Post Captains, and eleven, or twelve, hundred commanders of their fleet—fellows that never were “afloat” but eat up the taxes in the shape of half pay and perquisites.—The number of Generals, Colonels, Majors and Captains of the army bear like proportion—blades who do no duty except swallow up their share of the taxes, and, as the Scotchman says, “glower for more.”

All this, be it remembered is exclusive of the landrents, and the produce of mines, lead, coal, and iron, which amount to an enormous sum and is swallowed up by the all-devouring aristo-



crazy. It is exclusive also of the tax levied by the Corn Law—a tax exceeding in amount the entire revenue of the British Nation, and all this, be it remembered, springs, directly and immediately, from the monopoly of the soil, which carries with it also monopoly of Legislation. Such a state of things might well warn us in this Republic from opening a door by which the overshadowing evil could get in among us.

The door *is* open, however, the evil *is* among us. In the multitude of business they had to transact—in the chaos which they had to breathe upon, and convert into ‘order,’ it is not in the least strange that the Fathers of our Revolution should leave something unheeded—some evils untouched, if not unobserved, to be corrected by the Reforming hand of their posterity.

The greatest, beyond all comparison, of these evils is Land Monopoly. It had not in the days of the Revolutionary sages, nor has it yet, grown up into a great practical evil. But it is increasing its growth silently and steadily. The Public Lands are rapidly passing into the hands of private individuals.—Those lands will be exhausted sooner or later—I care not for the question of time. Individuals will hold, and own them, every acre. No pre-emption rights then. No resource, only apply to the monopolist and before entering upon *his property*, subscribe to whatever terms the will of a monopolist may dictate. Then grows up, unchecked, and unquestioned a landed Oligarchy, striking deeper, wider, and more poisonous root over the Republic in each succeeding year!

But here we are met by the great *popular* error—namely; “That we must not restrict the liberty of the Citizen—that every individual must be free to accumulate as much as he pleases, and to restrict this freedom would be tyranny.”

Now there is a speciousness about this argument which renders it dangerous. There is just as much truth in it as gives currency to what is false. Men have an indefeasible right to accumulate all that is necessary for their rational enjoyments & no more. In such a way, too, and under such limitations, that their doing so shall not inflict any injury on society at large. Such is the limitation set to our personal liberty—we may be cunning to cheat, we may be strong to overpower, and deprive our neighbors of their property; but the law will not permit us to exercise those talents; it “restricts our liberty” in these matters; and yet I believe few will call it “tyranny” except, perhaps, the denizens of our Police-offices, and Prisons.

But to permit men to accumulate unbounded ownership of the soil is immeasurably more unjust, and impolitic, than even

to give them a license to prey upon society as *individual* thieves. In the latter case men would be prepared to defend their rights, and would be just as able to protect their property as the thieves would be to attack it—but when you allow an individual to “crown” a whole territory of land, he can plunder the entire population residing on it, with more ease and safety than a common thief could rob a solitary hen-roost. In fact your land Monopolist has nothing to do but sit at his ease—the law first sanctions his impudent claim, and then proceeds to levy, and take away the property of the people for his use and benefit. With the moral and intellectual slaves who follow blindfold in the track of barbarous Europe it would be idle to reason in this matter. Those will raise a senseless howl about the inviolability of “property.” And yet those very men, with all their sensibility are, in reality, the violators of, and trampers on, the rights of property—the defenders and champions of rapine and public theft.

Who owns the soil? who is its Head Landlord? who *has a right* to give it to another? Come—come,—there is no use in attempting to impose the nursery tale that a trafficking Company, or an insolent Monarch who never did anything useful, had a right to dispose of immeasurable territories of land, which they never so much as set their foot upon. There may be found men in this Republic besotted enough to believe such doctrine, but men capable of believing such stuff as this are too low in the scale of intelligence to deserve serious notice.

Just as absurd and preposterous is the notion, that the native tribes can convey ownership of the soil. The poor Indian has a right to glean a sustenance from the hunting field, but it is extremely childish to suppose that he has a title in the soil, stretching beyond his own lifetime, and extending beyond his own wants. Before I admit that the Indian can *convey* an absolute and unending ownership of the soil, it must first be shown to me that he is in possession of such ownership himself.

So also it is with any body of Legislators. Men are born to the inheritance of Freedom—all men are free by *nature*—Americans are free, both by nature and by their Governmental Institutions. Now, free and independent use of the soil is the first element of the freedom and independence of any people. So long as men are hungry they must eat, whatever price is paid for the victuals. Nothing produces stuff fit to eat but the soil—and when a few monopolists have got hold of the soil, they hold in their hands the power of life and death. This world is theirs, and if you do not subscribe to *their* conditions there is no room

or you upon it. Yes, let the landed aristocracy of Britain exert their authority at this moment, let them push that authority to the full extent, and they could push, off the British Islands and into the sea, every man, woman, and child which those Islands contain. The land belongs to the aristocracy, and the rest of the population are, in the eye of the law, one vast crowd of TRESPASSERS.

Such is the theory of the beautiful system, and what is its practise? It is true they have not as yet enforced their authority, and turned the population into the sea in order to turn the Islands into one boundless hunting ground. They have not gone to work on a scale quite so large but they have done "considerable" in a small way. A specimen of which it might be as well to introduce here.

We all remember, or have read, something about "Catholic Emancipation" in 'Great' Britain. We all know that by its operation a few Catholic *Noblemen* got into the House of Lords and a handful of Catholic lawyers got into the House of Commons. This we know, because this fact—this "emancipation" was trumpeted to the wide world, as the mightiest achievement of modern times. But we do not know much about the price that was paid for "emancipation." We do not know that the Forty Shilling Freeholders of Ireland were DISFRANCHISED, as the price of Catholic Emancipation. We do not know that tens of thousands of those poor men were thrown out of their small farms, and even out of their houses, in the depth of winter.—We do not know that hundreds of them perished in the ditch sides where they had endeavored to construct rude sheds to keep out *a portion* of the winter tempest. We do not know that those who succeeded in begging their way to Scotland to seek labor-work, only went to leave their bones in a strange land, where thousands of them miserably perished. We do not know that those miserable men were doomed to death because they could no longer assist their landlord to manufacture members of Parliament. We do not know that their small fields were given to Ten Pound Freeholders, those being privileged to vote for M. P's. We do not know that one seat in Parliament has been, thus, purchased with the death of a thousand human beings. But it is time that we knew all those things, and that we would learn something from them. First—to estimate Catholic Emancipation at its true worth—and secondly to swear upon the book of God, that a beastly, murdering, landed Oligarchy shall have no place in This country.

If we do our children, hereafter, will not be permitted to till

a field, or touch a morsel of food without first subscribing to whatever conditions the "lords of the soil" may choose to dictate.

And what will be those conditions? Go ask the famished, heart-broken people of Europe.

But many, very many men indeed, in this country believe that it never can come to this in America. They have three safeguards against the evil, and on those safeguards they implicitly rely. One of these is our vast extent of territory—another is the intelligence and free spirit of our people; and the third is the fortunate absence of all laws of primogeniture and entail.

These are the three barricades which are to keep out the desolation, and make this country, what no other country has ever been, free from the curse of a landed oligarchy.

Now let us examine these three positions in detail.

Extent of territory—will afford a qualified protection until the public lands shall have merged into private ownership. How long is that likely to be?

The whole of the public lands may be estimated at twelve hundred millions of acres; their sale at present is not very rapid, perhaps three millions of acres a year. This, however, is owing to the re-action of 1836 '7. In these two years the quantity sold was forty millions of acres, making the ratio of twenty millions a year. Now, putting these two facts together, they warrant us in fixing the annual sales at about eight millions of acres, on an average of ten years say from 1837 to 1847.

Our population is now *five times* as numerous as it was sixty years ago. Sixty years hence it will be at least three times as numerous as it is now; it is not necessary I believe to waste time in proving that land sales will increase in proportion to the increase of our population—the more mouths the larger the market.

At this rate, sixty years hence, the public land sales will be twenty-five millions of acres per year. Count that up and see how long it will be swallowing up the public lands.

But there are other causes in operation that will precipitate the monopoly of those lands with a rapidity much beyond the calculation just made. Up to the present time most of the heavy speculators went to the wild tribes and made contracts with them for millions of acres. Thus large portions of the soil has come into the hands of Monopolists without appearing on the record of the Government Sales. This channel for speculation is now pretty much closed up; so that in future the heavy speculators will have to buy of the government, thereby vastly increasing the public sales.



Nor may it be overlooked that if impunity is given to boundless monopoly of land, and if our present tendency to luxury, and aristocratic society be suffered to go on unrebuked, this country will become a not undesirable residence for the younger limbs of aristocratic families in Europe. In that country the eldest son gets the estate, and on him is thrown the onus of providing for the younger branches. This has been done by quartering them upon the taxes, but their numbers are increasing, and taxes are diminishing, and the people are becoming, every year, more and more unmanageable. These younger branches, therefore, are likely to have more difficulty than usual in getting along; so that it would be no bad speculation for them to put half a years rent of an estate in their pocket (one or two hundred thousand dollars) come here and buy land for it, and settle it down with a TENANTRY which our increased population would readily supply, or which could be readily supplied from Europe.

Those causes are every one in operation. Let the reader combine them himself and calculate the time in which our public lands are destined to become private property. For my own part I am satisfied that, if not checked by the foresight of the people, every acre of land in this Republic will be the property of private individuals within one century from the present date, and more probably in one half that time. *Then* for a commencement of aristocratic power and domination.

But oh, we have a brave and intelligent people that will never permit things to come to that pass. How are they going to help it—in what manner are they going to work? Are they braver than the Republicans of Rome who, victorious everywhere, they turned their arms, were yet utterly beaten and put down by the swords of their own aristocracy.\* Are they intelligent? How will their intelligence set aside the “rights of property” when it has established itself in the land. When ninety-ninths of the public press—the entire pulpit, and all the wealth and ‘respectability’ of the Republic will be arrayed in its defence. How will the intelligence of the people *overturn* the evil then, if they have not the intelligence to *prevent* it now. *Then* the cure can only be effected by upturning *established* things, by taking from men those lands that many will suppose rightfully their own, and which the law of the country, withal, shall have guaranteed to them.

No! If it is permitted to reach that point, it will be extremely difficult, if not wholly impossible, to apply a remedy. We

\* Vide history of the two Gracchii.

are already in the current—it is drawing us steadily to the brow of the cataract, every moment we remain supine adds to our danger. *Now* we can save ourselves with ease, but let us wait let us get into the headlong vortex before we stretch to our oars and we will go down to destruction—a destruction which we shall have wilfully rushed on with our eyes open looking at it. So much for the extent, or “inexhaustibility” of our soil.

The next subject that demands our attention, is the absence of a primogeniture and entail law. This it is believed is the greatest safeguard we have against the growth of an aristocracy:

To me it appears that it is a very slender safeguard indeed. Even now a man may *will* his property to his eldest son, if he pleases, and if he does not do so, it is because there is not a motive sufficiently strong to induce him to take that course.

But if, when the Landlord and Tenant system be generally established, it should be found that land property brought with it political influence—if tenants should happen hereafter to rent land with the understanding that their votes should be given to their landlord—if in this manner the Landlord’s political weight would be, as it is now all over Europe, in exact proportion to the number of his acres—*then* we will discover a motive why the whole property should be bequeathed to the eldest son. In that case, he could use the political influence it would bring for the purpose of quartering the younger branches on the public purse, precisely as it is now in France and England. Navy, Army, Diplomacy and all manner of civil offices would offer a pretty fair field for them and as the landlords would (thro’ their tenants) have the control of legislation, all these places would be reserved for their gift. Thus we see, that if the dying father would turn his estate to the *best advantage* he would bequeath it all to one child, and he in return could provide for the remainder—not out of the estate, but out of the public taxes.

Many men hold that it is one characteristic of the aristocracy to take every means within their reach to strengthen their power and render it independent of popular control. This appears to be a pretty well founded opinion, it is at least borne out by the example of history. Now if the aristocracy of this country should happen to be true to this instinct, what security have we that they will not pass laws of primogeniture and entail, as the British aristocracy have done? In England, this was done in order that the family influence should be preserved. Will not the same motive exist here?

They have studied the history of nations to little purpose who do not know that however slow may be the encroachments of power, it is always steady, unremitting, and *retentive*. What-

ever it gets, it is pretty sure to keep, unless it is wrenched from its hand in a violent struggle. Even in those struggles established power is, generally speaking, found to be the strongest. And the efforts of men to regain what their supine-ness has lost, often serves only to increase their wrongs and precipitate their final enslavement.

While we are safe let us keep ourselves so. Once into the toils it is by no means an easy matter to get out. Of this the Old World affords a mighty example. Of this, too, a singular and striking example is furnished nearer home.

Nearly about the centre of this State lies an extensive tract of land known by the name of the Helderberg. This is an elevated, healthy, and pleasant region lying on each side of the Hudson River, some twenty miles west of Albany. Its area is twenty four miles square, or 576 square miles.

About the year 1630 the Dutch West India Company became famous on the seas for a species of piracy. In one year they plundered the Spaniards and Portuguese of more than one hundred vessels laden with rich merchandize, and gold and silver. With a part of this money—so obtained—the Company bought from the Government of Holland jurisdiction over much land in this country, which did not at all belong to the said Government of Holland.

The Company, being invested with this very questionable authority, proceeded to send out agents (whom it was their good pleasure to dub *Patroons*) to form Colonies. On these *Patroons* was conferred both the "supreme control and inferior jurisdictions". Hereditary Governors they and their offspring were to be, with the *sole right of appointing all sheriffs, constables, and so forth*—the Company, or the *Patroon*, never dreaming about any such things as Republicanism and Universal Suffrage. These lands, and waters and all, were to continue the *Patroons' eternal heritage*. No man might squat upon any part of them without becoming a dependant of the *Patroon*; and none but the *Patroon* and his licentiates were permitted to either HUNT or FISH on the land, or waters. Indeed the terms of the Charter, granted to them (the *Patroons* aforesaid) show that it was not intended to people those colonies with freemen at all, but with the serfs of the *Patroon*. The 10th section provides, "That the service of the Colonists, or servants of the *Patroon*, should be assured them; due care being taken to *compel their service* according to their contracts."

In pursuance of this authority, the *Patroons* came over from Holland, and possessed themselves of immense tracts, chiefly



upon the Hudson. But even in those early times, and even by the privateering Company aforementioned, the evil and impolicy of these vast appropriations was seen, and according to Moulton, their ratification seems to have been obtained only by admitting other directors to participate in them. (*i. e.*) The 'other directors' sanctioned the plunder upon the express condition of getting a share of the spoils.

My limits don't admit, nor is it necessary, to trace the career of the Patroon and his servants or serfs from the above period to the present time. It is enough to know that the Representative of old Killian Van Rennsellaer, the *Heer Pauw*, is at this day in possession of the large territories "crowneyed" by his unpronounceable ancestor.

The spirit that settled down upon this country in '76, and which gave birth to our incomparable institutions, has slightly affected the prerogatives of the *Heer Pauw* of the present day: For instance, he has lost the hereditary office of Chief Magistrate, and also the power of appointing 'all Magistrates and officers within his jurisdiction'. I presume, too, that he has lost the exclusive right of hunting and fishing, as on a late visit to that part of the world I saw the young men going out to fowl and hunt, just as if every one of them was a *Heer Pauw* himself.

Those prerogatives the Patroon has lost; but there are others no less odious which he still retains, chiefly I presume because the attention of the people has not been sufficiently directed to their enormity.

The first of these is an exclusive ownership of all mines and minerals (British Fashion) in this vast region; also "all kills, creeks, streams, and runs of water." And the *exclusive* right of erecting "mills, mill-dams, and houses, and taking whatever ground he may desire for the purpose of working all mines and minerals. And also all such firewood and timber as he may want. And also the right to lay out as many roads as he pleases, merely deducting a bushel of wheat from the rent, in consideration of every 16 acres he may so use and occupy."

In this reservation we perceive not merely the spirit of insulting feudalism, but the very language used is a literal copy of the British leases. By this clause all tenants are *prohibited* from constructing a mill or any machine, to be set in motion by water power, for any purpose whatever. They may have skill and enterprise sufficient to make water power subservient to their comfort and civilization, but the Patroon will not suffer them to make any advance of the kind. They have their choice to grind up their bread stuffs with the hand, or to carry their



grain as *sucken*\* to the mills of Heer Pauw Junior! Such has ever been the spirit of tyranny—so has it ever hung a drag-chain on the progress of civilization!

The next reservation which this very modest gentleman, Stephen Van Rennsellaer, has secured to himself is termed the Quarter sales. This reserve secures to him one quarter of the entire purchase money of a farm every time it happens to change hands. Nor is this all. If Mr. Van Rennsellaer chooses to take the farm to himself, he can do so at a price *one fourth less* than it has been sold for. This clause opens a door through which, in time, the title of the farmers can be easily extinguished, and the *unlimited ownership* of the Patroons established over the whole property.

In this reservation, too, we see the spirit of British feudalism in its most barbarous days. Hallam informs us that when a tenant demised, the Baron (or British Patroon) seized upon the estate, and would not return it to his family until they paid him a large sum of money, which was called "Relief." With what faithfulness does our lord of the soil in this country follow the copy set before him by his illustrious prototypes!

And in those times of darkness the feudal Baron compelled his 'villains' (that was the name he gave them) to do all manner of drudgery about his castle. This is, of course followed by Van Rennsellaer. Every tenant is compelled to come with his team and wagon, and do any kind of drudgery he is ordered to do by his lord and master!

It is well known that the feudal barons, though in their incipient rise they plundered henroosts for a living), as they waxed in power and greatness in the land, compelled the farmer to bring in bullocks, sheep, fowls, pigs, and all that manner of stuff to cover the baron's great Hall table. These, however, the farmer was generally invited to partake of; so that although he was compelled to bring in his property and lay it at the feet of the freebooting lord, yet was he permitted to take pot luck along with the rest of the retainers: the lord himself presiding at the head of the table. This example, thus laid down by the feudal barons, was too *valuable* to be lost sight of by our modern *Heer Pauw*—the tenants, therefore, are compelled to shoulder a bundle of ducks, and deposit them periodically at the door of the Mansion House of the American Baron—or at such spot 'within a mile of the Mansion House' as may be designated by the lord Patroon. One part of the example has,

\*For *sucken*, its definition, see Hab Miller in Scott's Monastery

however by all accounts, been forgotten by our Republican 'lord of the soil.' He seem to inherit all the greed, without any of the generosity of the old feudal plunderers: He does not, so far as we are aware, invite the Republican serfs in, to take a share of the hens and ducks—he merely "designates" a spot for them to deposit the tribute—and that done, they have his instructions to retire to their homes till such time as he wants them again to carry in fowls, or do his menial drudgery.

There is a vague impression abroad that the tenants refuse to pay rent, and are determined to hold themselves wholly independent of Mr Van Rennsellaer. This is untrue. What the tenants object to are the menial drudgery—the tribute of ducks—the 'Quarters' Sales,' and the 'reservation' of all mines, and the monopoly of all water power. They object to these not merely because they are burthensome, but also because they are insulting—not merely because they are degrading to the farmers themselves, but also because they are a reproach to the American Nation. The stipulated wheat rent they agree to pay according to the original contract made when they entered upon the lands. In that contract the odious conditions had no place, but were, it appears, engrafted upon it afterward when the Patroon had got the settlers under restraint, when their labor and capital were expended on the soil—and when they had no alternative save to submit to his dictation or lose all they were worth in the world.

I take the following extract from a communication which appeared some time ago in the Helderberg Advocate, Signed, "EQUAL RIGHTS" It is written in all the simplicity of truth, and bears internal evidence of fairness.

"In the first settlement of the West part of the Manor now claimed by Van Rennsellar, the settlers after a few years, hearing that it was claimed by the Patroon some of them went to ascertain the fact. When they informed him where they had settled, he said they were not on his lands, his grant extending but twelve miles West from the Hudson River. But after a few years finding no one claimed it, he agreeable with the history given by Mr. Bernard took advantage of the grant which extended but eight miles back from the river and claimed territory of twenty-four miles square on both sides of the river. No one opposed his claim, he had control of both civil and military power at that time and the settlers were too few to resist, knowing it would be useless to contend with him in law for their right and consequently submitted to him as their liege Lord.—

Application was then made to him for the privilege of settlement and he being anxious to confirm his title by leasing the lands, made fair and generous proposals, as they then thought, telling them to go and select such pieces as they wished to occupy, mark the trees around their lot, go and occupy the premises seven years free from rent, and after that term of years they were to have a lease for a moderate wheat rent annually. Wheat was then worth from fifty to sixty cents per bushel, and they were to pay but five shillings for the lease, yet when they took them they were charged ten dollars. Not knowing the degrading conditions and restrictions those leases were to contain, they thought the terms favorable. They followed the Indian's paths into the wilderness, and choosing the lots commenced their labors felling the trees, erecting a hut of logs for a dwelling they persevered though laboring under all the privations to which new countries are subject.

In seven years many had made large improvements, erected comfortable buildings and were anxious to get their leases, but when they were presented and *found to contain all those cursed reservations and restrictions*, finding that one fourth and in some instances one third of their labor was claimed by the landlord, *they refused to take them saying they were not such leases as he had agreed to give them.* They were told by his agent that some things were put in merely to make out a form to fill up the lease and would never be exacted. Some wished to have the price of wheat fixed so that if the land should fail to produce wheat he could not take advantage of the price. They were assured by the agent that should the land fail to grow wheat they would *never be charged over seven or eight shillings per bushel* and if they would not accept of the lease on these conditions they might leave the premises. The leases with all their unjust and degrading conditions were presented, the settlers shuddered at the thought of binding themselves and posterity, slaves to a tyrant, but on the other hand they had spent seven years of incessant toil in improving the premises—they were surrounded by growing families dependent on them for support—their home, their all, that made life dear to them, must either be lost and ruined, or they must take the lease.

The thought of again enduring all the privations incident to another settlement in the wilderness was too much, and strange as it may seem they accepted the leases. Others took them not knowing the degrading conditions until about three years ago. There is yet left among us a sufficient number of the first settlers to prove a number of the facts here stated. For a few years

while clearing away the forest, the land produced a fair yield of wheat, and the farmers bore the burthen with patience, the other reservations and restrictions not being enforced.

As soon as they had cleared up their farms, the land would produce no more wheat, and then we should think there was in justice and equity a failure of the contract on the part of the landlord. But instead of doing as he had agreed, to charge no more than seven or eight shillings a bushel at most for wheat, he immediately took advantage of the necessity of the tenants and he resorted to the most selfish and unfair practise of *purchasing a few loads of wheat at an advanced price, when the rent became due, of from one to two shillings a bushel above the merke to fix a price for his rent.*

Some years they have paid three times the amount of what their rent would have been had he performed what he promised them when they took their leases, and twenty shillings for the days service and fowls to boot. The whole rent on a lot of 160 acres for forty five years with the interest at seven per cent will make the enormous sum of \$3 845 profit to the landlord, not including quarter sales ; rent for water power &c. The rent for the same time at seven shilling a bushel with the same rate of interest would amount to 1 753, showing a difference of \$2,092 which sum has been taken from the poor tenant contrary to a fair verbal agreement. This sum would now pay thirteen dollars per acre for a lot of 160 acres, and lands adjoining this Patent could be purchased for fifty cents per acre at the time these leases were given.

"Thus we see taking the west half the manor they have contributed the immense sum of \$4,429,440 which was paid to the landlords, \$2,409, 884 of which, has, contrary to all right and justice and in opposition to the laws of both God and man, been extorted from the tenants. If he had distributed any part of this large sum on the patent in erecting mills or factories, as *he* only had a right, for the convenience of the tenants we should not have so much reason to complain. Instead of pursuing this reasonable course, he has expended large sums, drawn from us, in the purchase of LARGE TRACTS OF LAND in other parts of the state, and in *Building lots in the cities* and no doubt has often flattered himself that he should soon be Lord of the State or that his children would all become rich Land Barons.

And, describing the first resistance of the "Tenantry", the writer proceeds.

"The landlord understanding the course we had determined



to pursue, directed to the Chairman of our Committee a letter requesting us to appoint a number of our citizens as a Committee to wait on him at an appointed time at his office and he would make such proposals as would satisfy the tenants. Anxious for a settlement of the difficulties on fair and honorable terms, they immediately called meetings in the different towns and selected from each, five of their most worthy and upright citizens to call on the landlord agreeably to his request. They called at the time appointed by him at his office, His Lordship was not in and the agent sent for him. The Committee not being offered a seat, each selected for himself, there being but two or three chairs in the room, some occupied the window sills, some the stove, others lower seats, and we believe when his Lordship entered they were all seated. He passed through the room without paying the least attention to the Committee, into the back part of the office, where several minions were in session. After a short stay, he returned in the same haughty style, walked to the end of the office, and seated himself on the steps casting an indignant and scornful glance on the Committee, as much to say "serfs, you are beneath my notice."

Now just pause and contemplate the picture here presented. See the simple honest hearted citizen toiling thro' long years of difficulty and privation. Hoping to reclaim a home that will make this evening of life comfortable and provide for the little ones that are growing up around him. And then figure to yourself the Patroon swilling his wine, lolling on his cushions,—riding about in his barouche—reposing himself upon the lap of ease and luxury, and preparing his "leases" by which to cheat and enslave men every way better than himself.

It is not denied that the actual position of the Helderberg farmers is a disgraceful one--insulting not merely to themselves but the majesty of the American People. Everybody that I have conversed with, admits this; but then, say they, it is a contract between man and man, and the federal Constitution forbids the States to pass any laws impairing the obligations of contracts."

It is not my purpose to waste time in discussing the question of law. I might say something about the original contract made between the Patroon and the settlers, when the farmers were yet free. I might affirm that the second bargain possessed no quality of a contract as the assent of the people was a mere submission to save themselves from being plundered of all the toil and capital that they expended on the farms. I might show that even an oath taken under compulsion is not binding either in morality or law. I might maintain that if I sold myself into slavery and

received the price of my freedom, the state would 'impair' and set aside, the 'contract' I might maintain that thousand of contracts have been impaired by the emancipation of slaves in this State and by the taking of private property (real estate too) for public use. These arguments, and others of equal force, could be brought to demolish even the technical ground upon which, and upon which alone, rests the insulting pretensions of the Patroon. But I do not descend to the field of legal technicalities. I stand upon the high ground of Man's Birthright. I take in my hand that Law of Nature and Nature's God, which is the CONSTITUTION upon which all human laws must be founded or else they are no laws at all. I affirm that those lands claimed by Rennsellaer do not belong to him any more, but far less, than to the lowliest hind that furrows their soil. The law of Nature which is, as I said before, the Constitutional law of society, define clearly enough the just title of the Patroon. He is one child of our Common Father, and he is entitled to a child's share in our Common Inheritance—no more. There exists no power below God himself who could give him a monopoly of the Soil. If there does, name it—let us hear what it is?

The immortal author of the "DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE" has left us his opinion that the present generation is entitled only to the usufruct of the earth, and that they are bound to leave it free for the use of the generation that is to succeed them—the thickheaded Company of Dutch Privateers get up and, in effect, say, "behold are we not "the Lords of this soil" and shall we not give it, as an *eternal heritage* to Killian Heer Pauw Van Rennsellaer and to his heirs for ever and ever." Those who please to invert the laws of Nature and adopt the doctrine of the thickheaded Dutch Company, are, of course, at full liberty to do so—but for my part I cling to the law which is stamped upon Creation, and I have more respect for the least sentence that ever fell from the pen of Thomas Jefferson than for all the dirty greasy tobacco-dyed parchments that ever chronicled the wisdom of the big breeched sages of Old Amsterdam.

But I must conclude. What right do I contend for—what regulation do I propose by which that right is to be enforced?

I contend that every man who comes into this world has an equal right in the soil. I do not contend for an equal division of the soil among the people. I know that such a thing is not possible, nor is it even desirable. I am well aware—who is not ---that while one man embarks in mercantile, and another in manufacturing pursuits; while one chooses his home in the city, and

another his home on the mountain wave, equal divisions of land are out of the question. But the EQUAL RIGHT must ever exist in all its force and integrity so long as men come into the world, alike naked and equally clamorous for food.

This right is indeed affirmed by the highest legal and judicial authorities even of lord-ridden England. But some hold that the best way to realize it, is for one lord to stride like a Colossus over a whole territory, whilst the people move to and fro at his feet like ants on a mole-hill. Others think that all should work into a common stock and live out of that stock in common. Others again say, that men ought to work into one heap of production, each individual being paid in exact proportion to what labor he performs. Now the first of these schemes has been tried with a vengeance—and its merits are written in blood on every page of the world's history. The second plan has been tested—but won't do: the drone lives on the laborer.

The third plan has not, as yet, been practically tested, but I think it contains within it an element of discord that will bring about the total disruption of any association that may be formed on its principles. I allude to the different prices paid for different kinds of labor. A regulation which will disturb that brotherhood of feeling, and equality of privilege and rights which are indispensable to the prosperity, and even to the existence, of Communities.

Much has been said and written upon the great and practical advantages to be derived from those co-operative communities. But the advocates of those societies seem to overlook the fact that the system now established by common consent among all nations is in truth one vast system of co-operation.

Is not the Farmer raising pork and wheat for the Weaver, and the weaver in return fabricating coat and pantaloons for the farmer co-operating with each other, as literally as if they domiciled under the same roof-tree? Let the *Measure of Value* be uniform and unfluctuating—let the farmer sell his produce at the price put upon it by an open market. With the proceeds he can purchase the proceeds of the weaver's skill; and not only that, but the labor and ingenuity of ten thousand artisans are at his feet, soliciting him to take them in exchange, at prices regulated by public opinion, for the produce of his farm. This is indeed co-operation in its most comprehensive sense, and, if freed from the Anti-human Influences that are at work upon it, it would present a system as much superior to the little hole-and-corner communities that have been proposed, as the sun's light is superior to the dim-and-drowsy twinklings of a mid-night taper.



capital is the soil and minerals of this whole earth, and all the mechanical forces that are in existence, or may be called forth by human ingenuity.

Why has this great co-partnership—instituted by God himself, and extending through all time and over all nations—why, I ask, has it been productive of so little advantage to the great mass of the human family? The answer is—simply because a few directors seized upon the whole capital—made it their own individual property—and reduced the mass of the people from their natural position of working shareholders, to be mere *drudges* in the establishment.

Search the entire page of past history and you will find that thus it has ever been. Look at the picture of destitution and woe which is at this moment presented over Europe, and “the East.” Contemplate the causes that are in active operation among ourselves, and see if there is anything in them to save us from the universal lot of all past and present nations. No! Society has *no escape*—posterity has no escape—from servitude until some boundary is put to the individual accumulation of that capital stock which belongs, and inalienably belongs, to the whole human family. We may, if we please, adhere to the blind prejudices of the barbarous ages—we may in the plentitude of our ignorance and infatuation set aside the well defined laws of nature, and the no less explicit injunctions of God’s Word—we may permit individuals to monopolize the soil, and shut out starving man from the fruitfulness of Nature we may say to the grasping and the rapacious. “Go on; Clutch all; you have full liberty!” but if we do so we are sure to pay the deep, deep, penalty of our unutterable folly.

I do not propose a disruption of society—I urge no interference, present or prospective, with the ownership of personal property—I desire not to limit individual accumulation of artificial wealth produced by man’s labor. I fix no bound to the possession of houses, or anything created by man’s hand or reared by his industry—I do not approach, to disturb it, the *present* ownership of land—let all existing deeds and titles remain in full force, no matter how unjust or unreasonable such titles may be. What I propose to prohibit, is, all FUTURE Monopoly of the Soil—to pass a law declaring that no deed executed, or transferred, *for the time to come*, shall be valid in law if granting, or conveying, to any individual more land than is necessary for such individual’s rational requirements: Say a quantity not above the appraised value of \$20,000, and in no case to exceed 500 acres.

Let this law be passed—let it become a provision of the fe-



deral Constitution—let it be preserved intact as a sacred principle of our Institutions, and in return it will preserve those Institutions from change or decay as long as a respect for freedom lives in the hearts of our descendants, even to the remotest ages of the world.

But, on the other side, if you permit unprincipled and ambitious men to monopolize the soil, they will become masters of the country in the certain order of cause and effect. Holding in their hands the STOREHOUSE OF FOOD, they will make men's physical necessities subdue their love of freedom. They will flood the Halls of Legislation sent there by the votes of their dependant tenants. Then rapacity and wrong will assume all the due forms of "law and order"—*then* our unhappy descendants will be coerced, enslaved, famished to death by Acts of Parliament—*THEN* resistance to the oppression will be stigmatized as a "crime" against "lawful authority"—*THEN* our country will career down the steep of

"Wealth, Vice, Corruption, Barbarism at last."

our fate will be the common fate, with this difference, that we will run our vessel on the rocks with a full chart of the destruction spread out before us—we will madly dash upon the lee shore while ten thousand beacon lights flame above, to warn us off the danger.

Reader! You are a rational and accountable being. You are accountable, both to posterity and to your God. Examine this question with that serious attention which is due to its great and far-reaching importance. If on a careful examination you are satisfied that there is *no* danger ahead, then of course you are at liberty to "pass over on the other side of the way", and offer no help, where, in your opinion, no help is required.—But if, on a deliberate examination, you come to the conclusion that there *is* danger to our institutions and to our posterity from the unbounded accumulation of wealth: Then I call upon you not to lay down this book, and with it dismiss the subject from your thoughts. If you do so you are *not* doing your duty—you are not acting either a *just* or a *manly* part towards those countless millions whose bondage or freedom, whose weal or woe, is staked upon the momentous issue. Meet the necessity like a man. Come to the rescue of our institutions while it is yet time.—Put a stop to the accumulation of enormous wealth\*. Why should it be suffered? What good can accrue from it even to

Are not our Churches prohibited from holding more than a limited amount of property? Why is a distinction made? Are Churches more corrupt than individuals? I deny it. Churches cherished and supported the English poor. Individuals turned them out to die.



the rich men themselves? Whether squandered in excess, or hoarded up with the iron-grasp of covetousness, is it not alike subversive of Morality and Religion—alike productive of guilt and crime? Look into the simple and harmonious laws of nature, and see how little man's rational enjoyments are dependant upon vast accumulations of wealth. Search the Scripture, and there see the doom denounced against those who "lay up for themselves treasures on earth." In pity even to those men themselves, limit their field of sordid accumulation. But still more prohibit it, in compassion to the countless myriads of coming posterity. Look to the example already furnished on our own "free" hills. See how thirty thousand freemen must be degraded into serfs, in order to manufacture, and support one "Lord of the Soil"! And, seeing these things, will you permit the soil—the source of man's sustenance—to become the prey of the monopolist? No! Let him take all else he pleases; let him add house to house, let his storerooms groan with accumulated merchandize—let him heap all the gold and silver he can scrape together with his clutching and palsied hand—but oh preserve THE SOIL from his pollution.—Let the cultivators of the soil be the Proprietors of the soil.—Do this, and whatever corruption may be engendered in cities by the baneful influence of Wealth, will be purified and dissipated by the unpurchaseable virtue of an independent and rural population.

Reader!—will you not help us in this work? An association has been formed in New-York for the purpose of receiving any response that may be sent in from the Public Mind. Communicate with us at 99 Reade Street N. Y. Ascertain what amount of co-operation can be furnished in your neighborhood. It is in contemplation to establish a paper for the advocacy of those principles—to employ lecturers, aided by diagrams illustrating the sin of luxury on one side, and the bitter sufferings of extreme poverty on the other—contrasting the horrors of the battle-field with the calm serenity of the quiet rural landscape. Holding up to view the orgies of a sensual aristocracy, and placing in juxtaposition the death scaffold, with the executioner at work, killing the helpless, unresisting prisoner, whose only crime was the highest effort of human virtue—the virtue of our own good and Godlike Washington. These, and other means are in contemplation by the Society, and Reader once more, and for the last time, they invite your assistance and co-operation.



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